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Thesis

G. K. CHESTERTON'S VIEWS ON AN IDEAL SOCIETY

by

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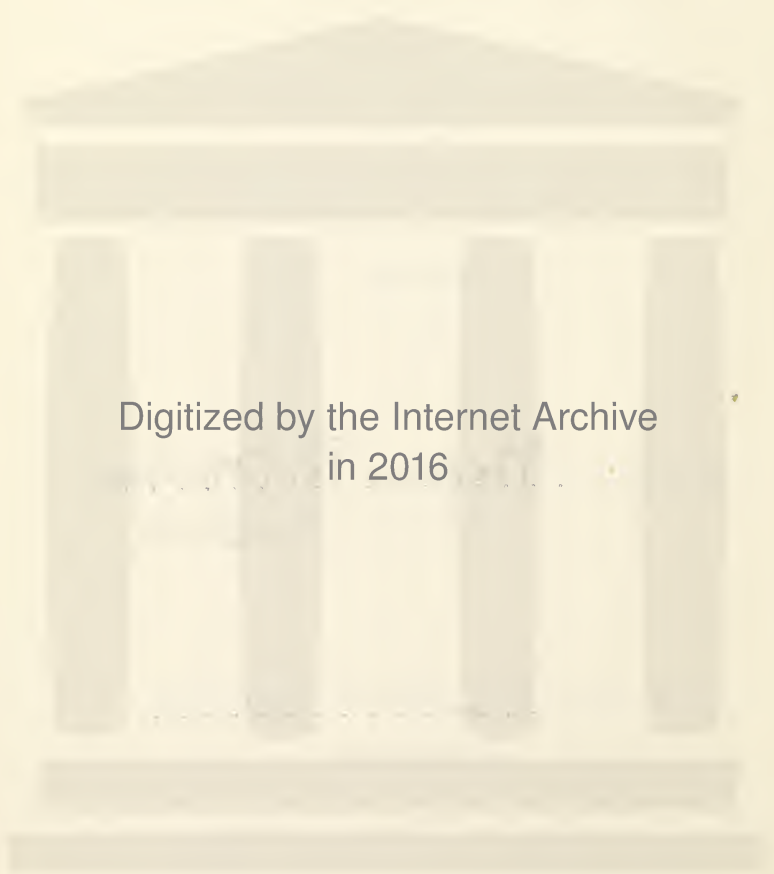
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a result of interest in a modern enigma: the conflicting ideals of our contemporary civilization. A study of man's search for happiness, especially during the past fifty years, reveals a large number of theorists; some who claim to be planting the signposts to Utopia; others who seek to remodel man in his present status; some who vociferously assert their conclusions to be entirely effectual to the attainment of perfection; others who more modestly present their proposals as hypothetical procedures in need of verification. In nearly all cases the respective remedy-makers for society seek experimentation for their social formulas. In certain areas of social need there has been opportunity provided in which to establish the relative merits and demerits of a number of these social schemes.

The United States of America has been a proving ground for social theorists whose panaceas have ranged in nature from a campaign against a single personal or social vice to the establishment of a working model on a small scale, ostensibly (if desirable) to be adopted by society in general. A glance into history recalls varied types of examples from the relatively recent experiment in Prohibition to those at New Harmony, Fruitlands, and Brooks Farm. The comparative peacefulness of such projects has left society, in the main,

appreciably unaffected by their successes or failures; however, a great contrast is furnished especially in the pressure exerted by alien elements in the traditional social order, particularly those engulfing a whole people, as the dictums of Naziism, Fascism, and Communism. The conflict ^{between} established society and the aims and methods of these, among others, has precipitated clashes into which even democracies have finally been drawn--and World War II is on.

While theorists are to a degree harmless as long as they confine activities to expression of their opinions and do not attempt to interfere with individual liberty they can be permitted the freedom of speech guaranteed by the ideals of democracy, but when they exhibit a fanaticism which seeks to effect an objective that will undermine the integrity of the individual or the security of the nation, it is time to recognize them as the fallacies they are and correct them accordingly. Such would be the advice of Chesterton. It was while reading into the field of social literature that a study of the diversity of social thought revealed in the controversy between the Socialistic philosophies of George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells and those representing a traditional view of society led to a consideration of the position taken by Belloc, with his theory of the Servile State, and Chesterton, with his plan for the restoration of liberty and property to the common man through Distributism.

To complete the task of organizing this thesis, it was necessary to read extensively into the writings of Chesterton from the time of his entrance into public controversy at the outbreak of the Boer War through the works published posthumously to 1940. In addition to this a number of books written on Chesterton, in the form of biographies and criticisms, were used. A source of much information was Chesterton's Autobiography, a fascinating account of events, illuminated with the poignant comments and opinions of this energetic English journalist and philosopher. For the greater part, Chesterton's writings are essays compiled from his journalistic days and printed in book form. The Outline of Sanity, his outline of Distributism, was frequently consulted as was What's Wrong With the World, a gold-mine of his social views, while The End of the Armistice, published posthumously in 1940, furnished an excellent source for his views on war and peace. The other works used for reference are to be found in the bibliography.

It is necessary to state here that the social philosophy of Chesterton is evident in all his writings from the lengthiest book to the shortest essay. It is also noteworthy that his thought on society did not change drastically, and his last writings contain the same hopefulness for the betterment of humanity apparent in his early works.

There is a complete absence of cynicism, perhaps due chiefly to the fact that his concept of Man and his destiny, identical with that of orthodox Christianity, afforded him a deep faith in the promise of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The purpose of this thesis is to bring together the main points of Chesterton's philosophy of society. The balance for which it called is synonymous with that of Christianity. The results of the task are presented herein with the assurance that it is only in outline; for a complete treatment of the subject would, of necessity, expand into several volumes.

It is indeed a challenge to have before one the tremendous purpose of fulfilling the requirement of writing within a limited number of pages the broad and complex picture of the life and times of Gilbert Keith Chesterton. To effect an approximation of exactitude in this presentation it has been necessary to select from an abundance of material the most cogent information with which to build a basic concept of the life and influence of this genial English writer and critic.

Chesterton was one of those rare persons who appear rather infrequently in the course of history and possess the technique of holding the mirror to life in their respective age in such a way that the world is made conscious of a soiled countenance and, with the same uniqueness of analysis and clarity of vision, prescribe the most effective cleansing agent. Concerned chiefly with making the world better than he saw it, he became one of the outstanding essayists and controversialists of modern times. Yet he was more than any of the essayists of his day; for he was master of the paradox, which as one critic observed, is to say that "he is Master of the Temple of Understanding." (1) His essays contain such a fascinating trend of thought, such intellectual

(1) Braybrooke, Patrick, GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON, p.120

challenge, that, ^{a personal} once begun, the reader is impelled to read through to the end to ascertain, not only at what conclusions he arrives, but with what brilliant analytical strokes of thought he achieves them. He was actually a bit of everything: he had the ability to make great men feel small when they really were; he was an optimist in the twentieth century when ordinary men were pessimistic; he was a poet of such quality that, had he continued in that field of endeavor, he might easily have become poet laureate; he was a novelist indulging in the most striking fantasy; he was an historian who averred the best way to read history is backwards and set out to show that England conquered William the Conqueror. He was a critic of the most broad-minded and generous type; he was in principle a theologian so sensible that the public hardly discovered the fact, for he was one who, rather than read Christian books in order to learn the Christian standpoint, discovered the tenets of rationalism.

Chesterton was born in 1874 in a suburb of London near Campden Hill, a place frequently referred to in his writings almost as often /as was the great enjoyment of his early life, the toy-theatre, a hobby of his father. Of average middle-class parentage, Chesterton grew up during the pessimism of the late Victorian era, and it is in contrast to the intellectual atmosphere of that period that he is outstanding. In his early youth he was greatly impressed with the optimism of Whitman and

the thought of Stevenson. It is regrettable that the limitations of this thesis preclude further delineation concerning this interesting period of his life, but it will be sufficient to note that as a result of his inspiration from Whitman's poems, he "set himself up to proclaim 'the whole divine democracy of things,' as he called it in the Wild Knight...We embraced passionately the ultimate goodness of all things, implying the acceptance of the basest and meanest no less than the noblest in life...and the redemption of the world by comradeship." (2) The same critic wrote that other forces had since compelled him to modify the "Whitmanite faith" and even to emphasize doctrines antagonistic to it like the existence of positive evil and the need for authority and definition. "But the robust faith in life which Whitman drove into him he has never abandoned." (3)

One of the characteristics of Chesterton most noted by his critics and admirers alike is the tendency to praise the society and culture of the Christian civilization of the Middle Ages. Those who disapprove of his enthusiasm in this connection have not analyzed the essence of medieval times as keenly as has Chesterton. We found in the society of the Middle Ages, though admitting its faults, a more promising atmosphere than that which pervades modern sceptical society

(2) Anonymous, GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON: A CRITICISM, p. 24

(3) Ibid., p.24

and indicated that the common sin of all, which was recognized by the medievalists, is forgotten today because of the superficiality rampant in modernism. In Chesterton, one of his three studies of men of the medieval period, he set out to prove that "our very social entity is disintegrating through a denial of the spiritual traditions on which a society is essentially based." (4) Chesterton did not suggest that we go back to the Middle Ages. He was far from being, as some suggest, in the extremes of romanticism; it is ^{rather} that he was more realistic than the majority of his critics; for the people of the Middle Ages were believers in the reality of progress toward perfection, whereas cynical moderns frequently employ the term progress as a mere catch-phrase.

Perhaps a better summary of Chesterton's literary style has not been written than this tribute by Braybrooke:

He is brilliant in an original manner; he is original in a brilliant way; scarcely any thought of his is not expressed in paradox. What is orthodox to him is heresy to other people; what is heresy to him is orthodox to other people; and the surprising fact is that he is usually right when he is orthodox and equally right when he is heretical... He gave to the essay a new impetus--almost, we might say, a 'sketch' form; it deals with subjects not so much in a dissertation as in a dissection. Having dissected one way so that we are quite sure no other method would do, he calmly dissects again in the opposite manner, leaving us gasping and finding that there really are two ways of looking at every question --a thing we never realize until we think about it. (5)

(4) O'Halloran, F.M., G. K. CHESTERTON AND MEDIEVALISM, p.12

(5) Braybrooke, Patrick, GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON, p. 1

Chesterton's entrance into public controversy was occasioned by the outbreak of the Boer war when he undertook in his journalistic pursuits to defend the rights of the small nation against the encroachments of materialistic imperialism. From his views on the rights of small nations came a symbolic novel called The Napoleon of Notting Hill, one of the finest fantasies of modern literature, containing in the opinion of Ward, his most recent biographer, the most picturesque account of his social philosophy. His next book to evoke a wide discussion was Heretics, followed within a few years by the equally sensation-making Orthodoxy, a defence of Christianity, not on the grounds of its truth or falsity, but on the grounds of its rationality. Of this Braybrooke wrote: "The method of apology that Chesterton takes is one that would cause the average theological student to turn white with fear." (6) Another theme in this book was the wisdom of fairyland which Chesterton called the sunny land of common sense and the child's land of Christian teaching. In a later work, The Everlasting Man, a defense of man's right to religion and religion's right to man, Chesterton proved that man's religion has always been monotheistic; that is, one deity represented the chief god. Chesterton's controversial writings are filled with a paradoxical style that some have found a muddle and others a mystery. This may be due to the fact that, as

(6) Op. cit., p. 4

Chesterton indicated, it is not until one sees a thing for the thousandth time that one sees it differently than before.

The typical Chestertonian paradox consists, not in the inversion of a proverb, but in the deliberate presentation of some unusual and unpopular thesis with all its provocative features displayed, with all the consequences which are likely to startle or anger opponents insisted on to the point of wild exaggeration...Closely connected with this provocative method of attack is a marked refusal to present his own position in pleasing or soothing colours, a determination that his opponents shall miss nothing in it that they will dislike. (7)

Chesterton was noted among the debaters of his time for his instantaneous presence of mind complemented by a piercing and brilliant wit. Among those whom he controverted, George Bernard Shaw is perhaps the best known to the American public. Between the two there arose a strong and lasting friendship. Of his debating days with Shaw, Chesterton wrote in his Autobiography:

My controversy with G.B.S., both logically and chronologically, is from the beginning. Since then I have always argued with him on almost every subject in the world; and we have ever been on opposite sides, without affectation or animosity. I have defended the institution of the family against his Platonist fancies about the State. I have defended the institutions of Beef and Beer against his hygienic severity of vegetarianism and total abstinence. I have defended the old Liberal notion of nationalism against the new Socialist notion of internationalism...I have defended what I regard as the sacred limitations of Man against what he regards as the soaring illimitability of Superman. Indeed it was in this last matter of Man and Superman that I felt the difference to become most clear and acute; and we had many discussions upon it with all sides. (8)

(7) Anonymous, GILBERT KENNETH CHESTERTON: A CRITICISM, p. 57
 (8) AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF G. K. CHESTERTON, p. 231

From all phases of the life of Chesterton, his journalistic career on Fleet Street, his firm friendships, his unlimited optimism, his literary endeavors, his biographical treatises, and his religious conversion, the clearest picture of his philosophy of life, aside from his religious philosophy, is reflected in his continuous debate over nearly a half century with G. B. Shaw. It is through a study of his ideas in this controversy that an understanding of his basic social views is derived. The outstanding characteristic of his controversial technique was the tenacious way in which he held to his opinions despite the strength of the opposition. He attributed this to the fact that he could never change his opinions until the reasons could be changed, and the veracity of his reasons prevented any such circumlocution. Perhaps this was because he had insight into the core of whatever problem he was engaged in debating; for, as he stated in his autobiography, "the first lesson is what is also the last lesson of life; that in everything that matters, the inside is much larger than the outside." (9)

Throughout his life Chesterton had a great admiration for small things and this may be why he placed so much faith in the rights of small nationalities in the imperialistic world of modern times. The same love of small places is evident in his deep respect for the place of the home in the formation of a worth-while life.

(9) Ibid., p. 35

Without giving myself any airs of the adventurer or globe-trotter, I may say I have seen something of the world; I have travelled in interesting places and talked to interesting men; I have been in political quarrels often turning into faction fights; I have talked to statesmen in the hour of the destiny of states; I have met most of the great poets and prose writers of my time; I have travelled in the track of some of the whirlwinds and earthquakes in the ends of the earth; I have lived in houses buried down in the tragic wars of Ireland; I have walked through the ruins of Polish palaces left behind by the Red Armies; I have heard talk of the secret signals of the Ku Klux Klan upon the borders of Texas; I have seen the fanatical Arabs come up from the desert to attack the Jews in Jerusalem. There are many journalists who have seen more of such things than I; but I have been a journalist and I have seen such things; there will be no difficulty in filling other chapters with such things; but they will be unmeaning if nobody understands that they still mean less to me than Punch and Judy on Campden Hill. (10)

The reference to Punch and Judy indicates what was perhaps symbolism in Chesterton's life: the toy-theater of his father's hobby shop which opened up for him the first meaning of life. Through it he first learned the secret of fairyland which led to a vivid appreciation of Christianity in which he believed all men would find the true secret of happiness. Fairyland for Chesterton was but a pathway to Christianity. He denoted his father as the Man with the Golden Key that first opened to him, by means of the toy-theater, a philosophy of life, while at the end of the autobiography he recalled:

There starts up again before me, the figure of a man who crosses a bridge and who carries a key; as I saw him when I first looked into fairyland through the window of my father's peepshow.

But I know that he who is called Pontifex, the Builder of the Bridge, is called also Claviger, the Bearer of the Key; and that such keys were given him to bind and loose when he was a poor fisher in a far province, beside a small and almost secret sea. (11)

It is not within the scope of this problem to trace the astounding development of Chesterton from the scepticism and agnosticism of his time to the acceptance of orthodoxy and Catholicism as the only rational philosophy in the modern age. For that reason, there has been only an indication of it here, but it is perhaps the primary achievement of his life, to which his social philosophy is subordinate only because it is a development from it.

In the following pages there is an attempt to present in outline Chesterton's views on an ideal society; his plan to free the average man from the shackles of monopoly through a redistribution of property; his consideration of the family as exceedingly important as the basic structure of society; and his conclusions relative to the conditions upon which permanent peace must be built.

(11) Ibid., p. 355

III

MAN THE DEMIGOD

The average person, when Chesterton is mentioned, usually remarks, in effect, "G.K. Chesterton...Oh, yes; he's the one who wrote those delightful detective stories." It is indeed tragic that the one for whom Chesterton had greatest regard and for whom he fought valiantly--the ordinary man--should know least about him.

Chesterton had great faith in the common man, his capabilities, potentialities, and integrity. Man, he held, was the greatest of God's creations; for God made of him a demigod. "God is that which can make something out of nothing. Man is that which can make something out of anything...The special joy of Man is limited creation, the combination of creation within limits." (1) Viewing Man as a special creation of God, Chesterton contended that the inheritance of the earth and the abundance thereof was for Man to use in accordance with his positive needs and desires. The monopoly of the reservoirs of nature by certain groups of men under capitalism was for Chesterton an example of the negative acquisitiveness in human nature and averse to the intentions of the Creator when He gave to all men the great faculty of freedom of the human will. All positive evil stems from the Fall of Man in Eden, and it is the acceptance of this fact that is basic to his interpretation of the inequalities existent in society throughout the ages. God created Man for

(1) Chesterton, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 50

the goodness in the world, but he gave him the freedom of choice. The idea is reflected in this excerpt from his poem, The Ballad of the White Horse:

When God put man in a garden
 He girt him with a sword
 And sent him forth a free knight
 That might betray his lord.

One of the chief tenets in Chesterton's social philosophy is his firm conviction in the dignity of Man as the basis of liberty. It is of necessity that liberty exists only where property exists, and it is the realization of this concept that property insures liberty which formed the core of the program of Distributism. From the first he had believed that a man should be in possession of something, even if it were only his own body. He saw that in the wake of materialistic concentration Man's possession of even that and was endangered/warned especially that in the fallacies of sterilization and social hygiene, applied indiscriminately throughout society, the very liberty bestowed upon Man in the beginning was imperiled.

Concerning the influence of Christianity upon the development of his views on the nature of Man the following is relevant: "I did not really understand what I meant by Liberty until I heard it called by the new name of Human Dignity. It was a name new to me, though it was part of a creed nearly two thousand years old." (2) Commenting upon

the conflict in modern philosophies concerning the origin and end of man, Chesterton deplored the absence of adequate discussion upon the matter.

In the modern world men seem to think the Universe is the one entirely important subject... Never has there been so little discussion about the nature of men as now when for the first time anyone can discuss it. The old restrictions meant that only the orthodox were allowed to discuss religion. Modern liberty means that nobody is allowed to discuss it. (3)

The key to the riddle of Man Chesterton believed to be contained in the doctrine of Original Sin and in the truth of Human Dignity.

Of the innate spirituality of Man Chesterton spoke with great conviction: "To each man one soul only is given; to each soul only is given a little power--the power at some moments to outgrow and swallow up the stars." (4) To the sceptic materialists who see man as merely another animal Chesterton advised a deep penetration into the problems of human nature that they might discover when they have looked the thousandth time the real nature of Man. Comparing theories of the evolutionist to a great growing and groping thing like a tree, he contrasted to it the essence of his thought:

I believe in the flower and the fruit; and the flower is often very small. The fruit is final and in that sense finite; it has a form and

(3) Anonymous, GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON: A CRITICISM, p. 127

(4) Chesterton, THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL, p. 294

and therefore a limit. There has been stamped upon it an image, which is the crown and consummation of an aim; and the medieval mystics used the same metaphor and called it Fruition. And applied to man, it means this: that man has been made more sacred than any superman or supermonkey; that his very limitations have already become holy and like a home; because of that sunken chamber in the rocks where God became very small." (5)

In all this controversy there is involved the doctrine which Chesterton preferred to teach: the idea of taking things with gratitude and not, as some moderns do, for granted. This again brings in religion which he believed should permeate the minds of men in all activities of life; for the very connotation of gratitude implies the reality of a Source--the Giver of Life. He implied that the real difficulty was not to enjoy things objectively but to enjoy enjoyment, to keep the capacity for liking what one really likes. This he presented as the practical problem in life for the philosophers to solve, but he saw contemporary solutions pitifully mixed and muddled because of the omission of the old ideas of humility and the gratitude of the unworthy. Condemning the pessimists for considering nothing was good enough for them and the optimists for thinking nothing bad enough for them to get good out of it, he challenged the moderns who clamor for man's right to life, experience, or happiness; and indicated that men fail to realize that their

rights really came from where the Candelion came, and for this reason there is an inability to value properly either men or Candelions until the Source is recognized. The inclination of Japan Men to worship nature instead of the Creator Chesterton attributed to the fact that "Nature can be a sort of fairy godmother. But there can only be fairy godmothers because there are godmothers; and there can only be godmothers because there is God." (6)

For an adequate understanding of Chesterton's philosophy of society and its ramifications it is necessary to capture an appreciation of the spirit, enthusiasm, and skill with which Chesterton treated Man in relation to his social problems by tracing all social implications back to their beginnings. He found that men have often erred and lost the way of right because "Men has been a tramp ever since Eden; but he always knew, or thought he knew, what he was looking for." (7) In his analysis of human progress through the centuries, he observed that historical evidence indicated that the fullest progress has not been duplicated since the Middle Ages, for in modern society there is a failure to ascertain the significance of things because a knowledge of origins is lacking. The Medieval man enjoyed nature but knew that the Creator had assigned all things to their particular place in the natural order,

(6) Ibid., p. 348

(7) Chesterton, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 39

rather than the modern concept that species were determined through evolutionary energy. Then, too, there was an intense awareness of the supernatural, and the Christian moral codes permeated all endeavors of mind or matter. Chesterton found that St. Francis of Assisi anticipated all that is most liberal and humanitarian today. He saw the medieval mind moving ever toward enlargement, toward greater light and liberty. He admired the rationality in the belief that truth was not to be found by going to extremes. Thomism, with its reiteration of the freedom of the will, Chesterton considered the only working philosophy even to the present day. He esteemed the unity of spiritual and social ideas of the time and lamented the lack of such unity in our society in which the need for a common aim is often forgotten. The Middle Ages, too, was a time in which the common man--the chief concern in Chesterton's social philosophy--was really given his chance, was considered as a man and not as another cog in the monopolistic machinery of industrialism. Indeed for Chesterton the medieval man was in many ways much freer and more economically independent when he had his land as well as his body and the additional advantage of living in times when Man was considered the chief of creatures; whereas the oppression of modern mechanistic forces has made Man subordinate to the machine. It is this fallacious concept which the Distributism sponsored by Chesterton seeks to abolish by

restoring the emphasis in industry to Man the Craftsman, typified for Chesterton in the guild system of the Middle Ages.

Chesterton expounded a fervent faith in the equality of all men for which he again found expression in the tenets of Christianity. "Though the most mystical, it is also the most practical summary of equality that all men bear the image of the King of Kings." The Christian dogma of equal duties implied for Chesterton a dogma of equal rights. "The idea of the equality of men is in substance simply the idea of the importance of Man." (8) While admitting that in types and talents Man is variant, the view that all men are in essence equal and therefore entitled to equal rights was paralleled for Chesterton in the fact that two coins having the same monetary value are equal. To illustrate further the essential equality of men, Chesterton traced the historical meaning of politeness, in which the elementary idea is equality, and showed that it is the only Greek word for citizenship. Thus in origin all men are equal as citizens.

The essential feature of Chesterton's reform was that he wished to keep Man exactly as he is and, by a thorough consideration of his nature and needs, gradually to effect changes for his betterment. This procedure was based upon the fact that Man is able to do one very important thing

(8) Chesterton, A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLAND, p. 202

that animals cannot accomplish: he is equipped to conquer and rise above his environment. In this respect he is ever the Superman in Chesterton's philosophy, which is based on genial good nature and a respect for the things that are important, specifically the chief of earthly creatures: Man.

One of the criticisms hurled at Chesterton was his frivolous manner in treating serious subjects like the nature of Man. It is because of this seeming digression from dignified discussion that the "laughing prophet", as he is known, succeeds in achieving a realization of the true nature of Man; for, as he replied, "I import frivolity into a discussion of the nature of Man because frivolity is a part of the nature of Man...Unless a man is part humorist, he is only in part a man." (10)

Today there is a great deal of speculation as to what the future course of humanity will be. There is, and has been, much theorizing among modern minds, particularly those of an evolutionary bias, that Man in the next thousand years will be a Superman, depending entirely upon whether the expanding technocracy will enable Man to fulfil the ultimate capacities of growth inherent in his nature. To this view may be opposed that of the traditionalist who accepts Man as Man, as in the past and present, so essentially will he be in the future, with a growth in wisdom through the cumulated

experience of the race of thinking. Upon the possibilities of this subject, Chesterton, who was ever optimistic concerning humanity and its efforts, wrote exhaustively. From the wealth of material available the following is perhaps most reflective of his thought in this matter:

Whether the human mind can advance or not, is a question too little discussed, for nothing can be more dangerous than to found our social philosophy on any theory which is debatable but has not been debated. But if we assume, for the sake of argument, that there has been in the past, or will be in the future, such a thing as a growth or improvement of the human mind itself, there still remains a very sharp objection to be raised against the modern version of that improvement. The vice of the modern notion of mental progress is that it is always something concerned with the breaking of bonds, the effacing of boundaries, the casting away of dogmas. But if there be such a thing as mental growth, it must mean the growth into a more and more definite conviction, into more and more dogmas. The human brain is a machine for coming to conclusions; if it cannot come to conclusions it is rusty. When we hear of a man too clever to believe, we are hearing of something having almost the character of a contradiction in terms...Man can hardly be defined...as an animal who makes tools...Man can be defined as an animal that makes dogmas...As he piles doctrine on doctrine and conclusion on conclusion in the formation of some tremendous scheme of philosophy and religion, he is, in the only legitimate sense of which the expression is capable, becoming more and more human. When he drops one doctrine after another in a refined scepticism, when he declines to tie himself to a system, when he says that he has outgrown definitions, when, in his own imagination, he sits as God, holding no form of creed but contemplating all, then he is by that very process sinking slowly backwards into the vagueness of the vagrant animals and the unconsciousness of the grass. ...If then, there is to be mental advance, it must be...in the construction of a definite philosophy of life. And that...must be right and the other

philosophies wrong. (11)

Chesterton believed, then, ~~that the mental~~ advance necessary for Man must be in the construction of a definite philosophy of life, a right philosophy. Those men who are great artists and wise enough to wish to be great philosophers constitute the Chestertonian hope for human progress; for though a small artist is content with art, Chesterton averred the great artist is content with nothing but everything. *

Chesterton indicated that Man must also, as all men who are normal do, possess a dream of perfection; because this ideal will preserve him from the threat of fanatics who flare up periodically in society. For maintenance of his social balance against evil and alien doctrines, Man must be "steeped in philosophy and soaked in religion." In politics or ethics religion is the very things which must be considered because it includes everything. The dogmatic tendency of Man must also be recognized; for many men are unwittingly dogmatic. "It is not thought 'dogmatic'...to assume the perfection or improvement of Man in this world; though that idea of progress is quite as unproved as the idea of immortality." (12) Because of his great consideration for the common man, Chesterton has often been called the Dickens of the Twentieth Century, but where Dickens

(11) Chesterton, G.K., HERETICS, p. 285f

(12) Ibid., p. 302

wished men aided by philanthropy, Chesterton believed that religion, which provided a true understanding of the nature of Man, was the one reliable organ of reform. The agent for the improvement of humanity will be found in Christianity, for the difficulty in the present age of agnosticism Chesterton analyzed as originating in the fact that "Men have not tired of Christianity; they have never found enough Christianity to tire of. Men have never wearied of political justice, they have wearied of waiting for it." (13)

To the assertion that Man is at his best when he is at work, Chesterton deliberately took exception, and championed the need of the working classes for more leisure. "Heaven does not work, it plays. Men are most themselves when they are free." (14) In the activity of work the specialist side of Man's nature, where he must have subordination, is employed in contrast to the social side of his nature where he must have equality. This demand of labor upon the average man, by the very specialization it requires, is regretted by Chesterton because he saw how greatly it thwarted the desirable tendency to universality which lends balance to human life.

This balance and universality has been the vision of many groups of men in many ages. It was the Liberal Education of Aristotle; the jack-of-all-trades artistry of Leonardo da Vinci and his friends; the august amateurishness of the Cavalier Person of Quality like Sir William

(13) Chesterton, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 49

(14) Ibid., p. 100

Temple of the great Earl of Dorset. It has appeared in literature in our time in the most erratic and opposite shapes, set to almost inaudible music by Walter Pater and enunciated through a fog-horn by Walt Whitman. But the great mass of men have always been unable to achieve this literal universality because of the nature of their work in the world. Not, let it be noted, because of the existence of the work. Leonardo da Vinci must have worked pretty hard; on the other hand many a government clerk, village constable, or elusive plumber may do (to all human appearance) no work at all, and yet show no signs of the Aristotelean universalism. What makes it difficult for the average man to be a universalist is that the average man has to be a specialist; he has not only to learn one trade, but to learn it so well as to uphold him in a more or less ruthless society. This is generally true of males from the first hunter to the last electrical engineer, each has not merely to act, but to excel...Those very miracles of the human mind on which the modern world prides itself, and rightly in the main, would be impossible without a certain concentration which disturbs the balance of reason...(15)

In summary, Chesterton's concept of Man includes the general acceptance of his Creation, the reality of the soul, the gift of free will, the fact of the Fall, and the recognition of Man as Christian Man. This embodies his equality and his rights, particularly his right to property. The medieval period is looked upon as more truly progressive than the present age because it was a time when the common man was appreciated in a society which held common spiritual and social aims, when the ideal of the brotherhood of all men was approximated to

(15) Chesterton, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 119f

a greater degree than it is in the modern materialistic age where monopolists have deprived the ordinary man of his liberty and individual opportunity because the ideal machine has replaced the ideal Man as the more important factor in industrialism, since profit has become more emphasized than craftsmanship. This concept is basic to the ideals of Distributism because it indicates Man as a being especially fitted to rise above any impediments in his environment. The road of true progress may be filled with obstacles, but the pace, of necessity, is gradual.

IV

THE FAMILY

The Family was to Chesterton the chief institution in organized society throughout the ages, the main kingdom in democracy, and a basic factor in his social philosophy. While it is the smallest of all organized groups in the social order, he considered it the greatest, the most enduring, the most natural, and the most essential. He saw it as foremost among the creators of the poetry and variety of life. The very existence of the family, for Chesterton, brought about two problems: that of life within the family; and that of the relationship between family and state.

...The supreme adventure is being born...When we step into the family by the act of being born, we do step into a world which is incalculable, into a world which has its own strange laws, into a world which could do without us, into a world that we have not made. In other words, when we step into the family we step into a fairy-tale. (1)

Beginning his thought in this way, the family became the center of romance, which for Chesterton was the deepest thing in life, deeper than reality itself. It was to him the essence of democracy and akin to anarchy, for within the confines of so small a unit as the family is usually contained all the object lessons of life: the paramount lesson teaching that life itself is an inside thing. It provides a test for our readiness to encounter the common variety of mankind.

(1) Chesterton, G. K., HERETICS, p. 191

It is a good thing for a man to live in a family for the same reason that it is a good thing for a man to be besieged in a city. It is a good thing for a man to live in a family in the same sense that it is a beautiful and delightful thing for a man to be snowed up in a street. They all force him to realize that life is not a thing from outside, but a thing from inside. Above all, they all insist upon the fact that life, if it be a truly stimulating and fascinating life, is a thing which, of its nature, exists in spite of ourselves...The family is a good institution because it is uncongenial. It is wholesome precisely because it contains so many divergencies and varieties. It is, as the sentimentalists say, like a little kingdom, and like most other little kingdoms, is generally in a state of something resembling anarchy. It is exactly because our brother George is not interested in our religious difficulties, but is interested in the Trocadero Restaurant, that the family has some of the bracing qualities of the commonwealth. It is precisely because our uncle Henry does not approve of the theatrical ambitions of our sister Sarah that the family is like humanity. The man and woman who, for good reasons and bad, revolt against the family are, for good reasons and bad, simply revolting against mankind. Aunt Elizabeth is unreasonable, like mankind. Papa is excitable, like mankind. Our youngest brother is mischievous, like mankind. Grandpapa is stupid, like the world; he is old, like the world.

Those who wish, rightly or wrongly, to step out of all this do definitely wish to step into a narrower world. They are dismayed and terrified by the largeness and variety of the family...(2)

Chesterton maintained that the family is the basis of all governmental organization; for "if mankind had not been organized into families it would never have had the organic power to be organized into commonwealths." (3) Thus the family existed before the state and is the cause, or basis, of the state; therefore, it is, and should be, essentially

(2) Ibid., p. 188f

(3) Bond, R. T., THE MAN WHO WAS CHESTERTON, p. 22

free and independent of all unnecessary interference from the state. It is against such state-sponsored programs as eugenics, birth-control, and divorce that Chesterton warned most vociferously; for the family, of necessity, he would have exist in freedom and develop in freedom, otherwise its very nature is thwarted. A very important function of the family is its service as a nurturing force, the only one of its kind; for it is in the customs of countless households that human culture is handed down from generation to generation. It is the core of the educative process and is the only means by which human culture will remain human.

Of the old ideals, Chesterton held domesticity as perhaps the oldest. The principle of domesticity involved for him the ideal house, the happy family, "the holy family of history". (4) Chesterton called the family the one anarchist institution in the state because it is older than the law and stands outside the state, for in most normal cases of family joys and sorrows the state has no mode of entry. "It is not so much that the law should interfere as that the law cannot interfere. Just as there are fields too far off for law, so there are fields too near; as a man may see the North Pole before he sees his own backbone." (5) In Chesterton's social thought the home was the basis of all social security and human happiness, and he saw the emphasis of modern living leading away from this ideal. There is too great a tendency

(4) Chesterton, G. K., WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 50

(5) Ibid., p. 54



to accept the need for a social and business life, and to neglect the importance of the family life which is centered in the home.

The foundation of the family must be established on permanence. This Chesterton saw as the chief reason for marriage, together with the need for enduring and patient protection for the human young. Consequently, Chesterton looked upon marriage as the one voluntary state which, to be correctly understood, must be regarded as a tradition and not, as is often the modern instance, as a natural inconvenience.

The traditions of humanity support humanity; and the central one is this tradition of marriage. And the essential of it is that a free man and a free woman choose to found on earth the only voluntary state; the only state which creates and loves its citizens. So long as these real responsible beings stand together, they can survive all the vast changes, deadlocks, and disappointments which make up mere political history. But if they fail each other, it is as certain as death that the "state" will fail them. (6)

Attacking the concept of marriage in the modern mind (which he preferred to denote by a more appropriate term, the modern absence of mind), Chesterton averred that the tragedy of the present day is constituted by "wives and husbands who seem to leave home...in the manner of somnabulists." (7) He crusaded in his writings for a return to the reality of marriage as a fact of natural history arising from the

(6) Bond, R.T., THE MAN WHO WAS CHESTERTON, p.22

(7) Ibid., p. 23

requirement of human young for parental protection for a longer period than any other creature on earth. Chesterton averred that, because the young of the human species in order to reach the fullest possibilities of a human culture at once varied, laborious, and elaborate must be under the protection of responsible persons for long periods of mental and moral growth, the institution of marriage is by nature a permanent one. The popular idea of the transitory nature of marriage Chesterton traced to a modern fallacy that accepts the latest psychology as the most reliable. He attributed this condition to the abandonment of reason by which every example of the rule is treated as an exception without a slight, or even elementary, consideration of the rule itself. Negative criticism is too often applied to marriage by moderns, chiefly because they fail to appreciate the essential atmosphere necessary to the success of marriage and family life. "The atmosphere of something safe and settled can only exist where people see it in the future as well as in the past." (8) Marriage must be treated as a permanent state because it, and the family for which it exists, are permanent and traditional in the history of human culture. Chesterton firmly believed that marriage itself was divine because it was sanctified by God, while divorce was but a human superstition.

(8) Ibid., p. 20

Admitting that marriage is not always harmonious, Chesterton advanced that fact as a positive argument for the duration of marriage.

Heathen and Christian alike have regarded marriage as a tie, a thing not normally to be sundered. Briefly, this human belief in a sexual bond rests on a principle of which the modern mind has made a very inadequate study. ...In everything worth having, even in every pleasure, there is a point of pain or tedium which must be survived, so that the pleasure may revive and endure. The joy of battle comes after the first fear of death; the joy of reading Vergil comes after the bore of learning him... The success of marriage comes after the failure of the honeymoon. All human vows, laws, and contracts are so many ways of surviving with success this breaking point, this instant of potential surrender. (9)

The essential element, according to Chesterton, is not the duration so much as the security, and if marriages are dissolved at will the security of the home and all that it means to individual liberty and happiness is jeopardized. Incompatibility, the common ground for divorce action, is paradoxically the one weak reason, in Chesterton's opinion, why everyone could be divorced. "I have known of many happy marriages but never a compatible one. The whole aim of marriage is to fight through and survive the instant when incompatibility becomes unquestionable. For man and woman, as such, are incompatible." (10)

In the estimation of average moderns there seems to lie about the word domesticity an aura of dullness from which

(9) Chesterton, G. K., WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 56

(10) Ibid., p. 58

they flee to other diversions, and home means only a place to hang one's hat. This was for Chesterton the chief fallacy of the modern idea of the family; for domesticity he saw as anything but dull. He looked upon his own childhood in the late Victorian period as proof of this assertion. Since in his social philosophy he continually thought of the greatest good for the greatest number, he observed that in the majority home is not what it used to be because the average workman is, under the encroachments of industrialism, necessarily limited in providing the right type of home for his children. For this reason he is sceptical of "all the modern talk about the necessary dullness of domesticity and the degrading drudgery that only has to make puddings or pies."

Only to make things! There is no greater thing to be said of God Himself than that He makes things. The manufacturer cannot even manufacture things; he can only pay to have them manufactured. And (in the same way) I am now incurably afflicted with a faint smile, when I hear a crowd of frivolous people, who could not make anything to save their lives, talking about the inevitable stuffiness of the Victorian home. We managed to make a good many things in our Victorian home which people now buy at insane prices from Art and Craft Shops; the sort of shops that have quite as much craft as art. All the things that happened in the house, or were in any sense done on the premises, linger in my imagination like a legend. (11)

Among the modern menaces to the sanctity of the family Chesterton included the fallacious comparison of the nature and organization of man to that of animals and insects.

He cited this as false and perverse because, where the old moralists permitted lower animals like the ant to enforce and typify man's morality, the modern who finds a perfection in the activities of insects and animals tends to subordinate the nature of man to the nature of beasts by urging men to act as the social insects do. With the more pernicious of these Chesterton included Maeterlinck's assertion that patriotism is the only religion and that, like the bees he studied, men should live for the Soul of the Hive. In condemning such an attitude Chesterton strongly urged that the family be treated as a human institution and not as an animalistic organization.

In resisting this horrible theory of the Soul of the Hive, we of Christendom stand not for ourselves but for all humanity; for the essential and distinctive human idea that one good and happy man is an end in himself, that a soul is worth saving. Nay, for those who like such biological fancies it might be well said that we stand as chiefs and champions of a whole section of nature, princes of the house whose cognizance is the backbone, standing for the milk of the individual mother and the courage of the wandering cub, representing the pathetic chivalry of the dog, the humor and perversity of cats, the affection of the tranquil horse, the loneliness of the lion. It is more to the point, however, to urge that this mere glorification of society as it is in the social insects, is a transformation and a dissolution in one of the outlines which have been specially the symbols of man. In the cloud and confusion of the flies and the bees is growing fainter and fainter, as if finally disappearing, the idea of the human family. (12)

(12) Chesterton, G.K., WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 254

Many reformers of society have failed to ameliorate the misery in the lower classes of the economic order because they have, Chesterton observed, substituted for the real trouble a cure which is only another kind of social disease. Among such mistakes of the sociological doctor which undermine the integrity of the family are those of eugenics and birth control. In the latter, Chesterton saw a fallacy in the name itself, which instead of control, meant abolition of birth itself, as the inevitable result of such a measure is the reduction in population. Since God is the Source of all life and the Creator of all things, no one has the right to usurp the privileges granted by the Creator as a means of propagation for the human race. Reasoning from this conclusion, Chesterton asserted that the proposal under the program of eugenics, that of selective breeding, is also a false cure which is really quite unnecessary if abuses in the economic and social orders are corrected. Eugenics is essentially against ethics.

Sexual selection, or what Christians call falling in love, is a part of man which in the rough and in the long run can be trusted...Far into the unfathomable past of our race we find the assumption that the founding of a family is the personal adventure of a free man...It is quite certain that the pagan freemen would have killed the first man that suggested eugenics seriously; for Plato was only a Bernard Shaw who unfortunately made his jokes in Greek. Among free men, the law, more often the creed, most commonly of all the custom, have laid all sorts of restrictions on sex for this or that. But law and creed and custom have never concen-

reated heavily except upon fixing the keeping the family together once it had been made...The act of founding the family...was an individual adventure outside the frontiers of the state. (13)

The evil which Chesterton saw in the proposal of the eugenicists was the entrance of an outside agency into the sacred circle of the family and a deliberate violation of the freedom of the individual. The aim of eugenics when applied widely to society would prevent anyone considered unintelligent by another from having a wife and family. The fallacy in this, Chesterton implied, was that man, being subject to human error, is unable to pass judgement upon another being because no man possesses sufficient clarity of vision and the divine wisdom necessary to formulate such a decision upon incalculable matters. Following this argument through, it can readily be appreciated that the danger involved centers about the chance that anyone who falls into the disfavor of administrators of eugenic regulations might easily be declared a maniac. Chesterton observed an insufficient understanding of humanity and human nature among the proponents of eugenics. The first principle of the plan permits somebody or something to criticize man with the same superiority that men criticize a madman, who is the only person Chesterton agreed is not wanted because he is so miserable himself and makes others miserable; but even he should be tolerated, for there

is no great suffering arising from the prevalence of negative and insufficient types. Beyond that the entire basis of eugenics is adverse, particularly so in the case of health; for it is not so much ill health that matters as it is that the individual is happy; and happiness, like life itself, is incalculable. To Chesterton the happiness of Keats and Stevenson, despite ill-health, proved that their life was meaningful and worthwhile. The chief objection to eugenics in Chesterton's opinion was the factor of a human, and therefore fallible, authority which decided the extent and application of an extremely unnatural idea. "In the matter of fundamental human rights, nothing can be above Man except God." (14)

Chesterton challenged the modern concept of heredity upon which eugenics is based as a distinct superstition, "that half-formed philosophy of fogs and omen; of curses and weird recurrence and darkness and the doom of blood which, as preached to humanity today, is often more inhuman than witchcraft itself." (15) Though humanity has acquired great knowledge on this subject there is still a great forest of facts concerning kinship and inheritance in which the modern eugenicist has not recognized the frontiers. Chesterton, however, observed that an omniscient Providence bestowed upon man a faculty to preserve a balance in heredity. "There

(14) Ibid., p. 77

(15) Ibid., p. 83



will always be something in the world which tends to keep outrageous unions exceptional; that influence is not eugenics but laughter." (16) Although asserting there is no reason to eugenics, Chesterton saw that there was plenty of motive, and that he attributed to the inadequately balanced industrial system. There he placed the entire cause for a degeneration of the human type; for generation after generation of industrial slaves, laboring their lives away for the mere pittance of wage which was hardly enough for provision for one, to say nothing of the usual large family, had exhausted the common man so greatly that he and his descendants were in a miserable condition. Chesterton maintained that it was not due to a degeneration inherent in the nature of the oppressed but rather in a degenerated consideration for the importance of man on the part of monopolistic industrialists. Man was not indeed replaceable like a machine, and the oppression of one generation in the beginnings of the factory system was reflected in the inadequacies of the contemporary type. Chesterton concluded that the true reason for human eugenics was not a human discrepancy but man's inhumanity to man.

For Chesterton the most important element in the family is the child, and it is in the interest of the children of the poor, the great human majority, that Chesterton would base all reforms of the social order, so necessary because

(16) Ibid., p. 106

of an uncontrolled and unregulated materialism. The essence of Chesterton's views on the family is expressed in his conviction that the child must have a fair chance in life.

Now the whole parable and purpose... is this: to assert that we must instantly begin all over again, and begin at the other end. I begin with a little girl's hair. That I know is a good thing at any rate. Whatever else is evil, the pride of a good mother in the beauty of her daughter is good. It is one of those adamantine tenderesses which are the touchstones of every age and every race. If other things are against it, other things must go down. If landlords and laws and sciences are against it, landlords and laws and sciences must go down. With the red hair of one she-urchin in the gutter I will set fire to all modern civilization. Because a girl should have long hair, she should have clean hair; because she should have clean hair, she should not have an unclean home; because she should not have an unclean home, she should have a free and leisured mother; because she should have a free and leisured mother, she should not have an usurious landlord; because there should not be an usurious landlord, there should be a redistribution of property; because there should be a redistribution of property, there shall be a revolution. That little urchin with the gold-red hair (whom I have just watched toddling past my house), she shall not be lopped and lamed and altered; her hair shall not be cut short like a convict's. No, all the kingdoms of the earth shall be hacked about and mutilated to suit her. The winds of the world shall be tempered to that lamb unshorn. All crowns that cannot fit her head shall be broken: all raiment and building that does not harmonize with her glory shall waste away. Her mother may bid her bind her hair, for that is a natural authority; but the Emperor of the Planet shall not bid her to cut it off. She is the human and sacred image; all around her the social fabric shall sway and split and fall; the pillars of society shall be shaken; and the roofs of ages come rushing down; and not one hair of her head shall be harmed. (17)

(17) Chesterton, G.K., WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 272f

In the ideal society envisioned by Chesterton all organization and all activity are based on the necessity of the free family in a social entity where the sacred human traditions and the true concept of human nature are respected and revered and fostered.

The idea of private property universal but private; the idea of families, free but still families; of domesticity democratic but still domestic; of one man, one house--this remains the real vision and magnet of mankind. The world may accept something more official and general, less human and intimate,...but it is not the world's desire. (18)

(18) Ibid., p. 80

V

EDUCATION: THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

Chesterton's concept of the nature of education is simple, yet comprehensive, and one with which any traditionalist could agree. Almost alone among those in his age, he championed the historic function of education. In short, he maintained that education in essence is manifestly the transmission of culture from human to human throughout the ages. "Education is tradition." (1)

The center of education is the child who should be treated as the most important being in the social order. The source of Chesterton's views on education are, to a great extent, formulated upon the impressions and experiences of his early life. Childhood was very dear to Chesterton, and he referred to that period as a lost experience in the land of the living. He maintained that it is the time of the greatest realism, when fact is ever distinguished from fiction by minds vigorous enough to be entirely serious.

I was subconsciously certain then, as I am consciously certain now, that there was the white and solid road and the worthy beginning of the life of man; and that it is man who afterwards darkens it with dreams or goes astray from it in self-deception. It is only the grown man who lives a life of make-believe and pretending; and it is he who has his head in a cloud. (2)

The nature of education arises from a "complex and many-sided culture to meet a complex and many-sided

(1) Ibid., p. 189

(2) AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF G.K.CHESTERTON, p. 49

world." (3) It meant, for Chesterton, the conveying of certain facts, views, and qualities to the last baby born, and in this it is all inclusive, for it might deal with the most trivial facts or the most absurd views and even offensive qualities. In other words, anything that is handed down from one generation to another is education. Viewing the conflict in aims and ideals among twentieth century educators, Chesterton observed that one idea was shared by all--an extreme dislike for authority. This tendency to separate dogma from education is wishful thinking for "dogma is actually the only thing that cannot be separated from education. It is education. A teacher who is not dogmatic is simply a teacher who is not teaching." (4)

Of all the fallacies in modern education, the one which Chesterton disliked most intensely was the prevalent idea that education is not instruction and does not teach by authority but, by a process of evolving, comes entirely from within and consists of drawing out the dormant faculties of each child.

I am certain I do not agree with the doctrine; I think it would be about as sane to say that milk comes from the baby as to say that the baby's educational merits do. There is, indeed, in each living creature a collection of forces and functions; but education means producing these in certain shapes and turning them to particular purposes, or it means nothing at all. Speaking is the most

(3) Bond, R. T., THE MAN WHO WAS CHESTERTON, p. 19 .

(4) Chesterton, G.K., WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 189

practical instance of the whole situation. You may indeed 'draw out' squeals and grunts from the child by simply poking and pulling him about, a pleasant but cruel pastime to which many psychologists are addicted. But you will wait and watch very patiently indeed before you draw the English language out of him. That you have to put into him; and there is an end of the matter. (5)

Referring to the inescapable authority in education, Chesterton asserted that there must be authority and the chief authority (which the influence of modernity is undermining and which at all costs must be preserved) is that of the parent. Even the educator who "draws out" is himself an authority when he selects what shall be drawn out and developed or what shall be suppressed. In other words, Chesterton contended that the modern school contains as much authority as the traditional scholastic institution, and for that reason it is as arbitrary and as coercive.

To Chesterton education seemed violent because it is creative and creative because it is in turn human. He viewed education as human action because it was essentially an interference with life and growth.

It is a trifling question whether the artist Man puts things into us or draws things out...The point is Man does what he likes. He claims the right to take his mother Nature under his control; he claims the right to make his child, the Superman, in his image. (6)

Chesterton maintained that this creative authority of man is necessary for the preservation of civilization and con-

(5) Ibid., p. 193

(6) Ibid., p. 196

cluded that what the modern meant by freedom in education was really root fear springing from a timidity to endure responsibilities, especially the responsibility imposed by centuries of civilization.

...the responsibility of affirming the truth of our human tradition and handing it on with a voice of authority, an unshaken voice. That is the one eternal education: to be sure enough that something is true that you dare tell it to a child. From this duty moderns are fleeing...their modern philosophies are so half-baked and hypothetical they cannot convince themselves enough to convince a newborn babe. This...is connected with the decay of democracy. When I say we should instruct our children, I mean that we should do it. It ought to be the oldest things that are taught to the youngest people; the assured and experienced truths that are put first to a baby. (7)

Critical of the modern school system that is often teaching by theories newer than the youngest pupil, Chesterton saw nothing but cultural decay if such conditions continue. Many of the newest schools fail to understand the first and oldest principle of the educational tradition: that innocence may learn from experience. The primary objective in education, as defined by Chesterton, is the restoration of simplicity and universal appreciation by creating an imaginative pleasure and appetite in everything, akin to that of the old artist who managed to convey the impression that the colors in his painting were important, precious, and intense. Modern educators have lost the technique of such color presentation and are like children

(7) Ibid., p. 197

struggling to gain an effect after having mixed all colors in the paintbox together. This idea of an abundance of available colors but a lack of color scheme is synonymous for Chesterton with the chief difficulty in all modern education.

Chesterton would select from all the current educational theories those which are most orthodox and suited to human nature. He would make universities more universal, like the schools of the Middle Ages which were more democratic than modern schools. He would restore to education the absent moral courage and admit nothing into the schools that had not been substantiated in practice; for the school, in his opinion, is not a place for theories. All methods would be reasonable and based upon a return to first principles of humanity. Above all, he would insist that the parent be allowed to determine the character of the education to which the young are subject, for only then will education be truly the transmission of human culture.

VI

THE PLACE OF WOMAN

Chesterton symbolized woman as the guardian of sanity, the Aristotle of the home, the champion of universal morality, and the representative of a complete system of thought. She is the balance which stabilizes the tendency to specialization in modern society, for she is the universal element in family life. From this it is evident that Chesterton believed the place of woman is in the home; but around this idea he wound, not a rope of modern cynicism woven of the dullness and drabness of domesticity, but rather the radiant halo and dignity of the wonder-worker who can make it possible to realize within earthly limits the happiness that springs from eternal verity.

Tradition has decided that only half of humanity shall be monomaniac. It has decided that in every home there shall be a tradesman and a Jack-of-all-trades. It has decided, rightly or wrongly, that this specialism and this universalism shall be divided between the sexes. Cleverness shall be left for the men and wisdom for women. (1)

Woman is the means whereby universalism may be restored to humanity because she is the center of the smallest unit in human life and can instil into the young the ideals and habits which will more than balance the demand of the world. To accomplish the fulfillment of this universal duty, she must be preserved from the direct cruelty of competitive or bureaucratic work. Thus, if the woman is obliged, under an

(1) Ibid., p. 121

intolerable economic system, to work in order that enough might be accumulated to meet the necessities of family maintenance, she cannot be expected to achieve this ideal of universality in the home.

Woman must be a cook, but not a competitive cook; a schoolmistress, but not a competitive schoolmistress; a house decorator, but not a competitive house decorator; a dressmaker but not a competitive dressmaker. She should have not one trade but twenty hobbies. (2)

To Chesterton the woman in commercial activity was out of place because the exactitude of competitive industrialism was not in attune with her natural gifts. Because women are by nature more conscientious than men, they are assets in the routine of business procedure, and thus are often exploited in the interests of profiteers who amass large fortunes through the unwitting cooperation of poorly paid office workers. It is for this reason that Chesterton believed women would be better in the home, for by placing themselves in competition with men in the labor market, they are upsetting the economic order in accepting wages that would be insufficient for any man who must maintain a family.

Instead of giving woman more rights, such as the right to work in commercial slavery, Chesterton would give her more privileges; for it is the home in which she can be truly free. He would favor any plan that would increase

(2) Ibid., p. 121

the authority of women as the despot of the home. While men represent the deliberative and democratic element in life, women represents the despotic and lends dignity to companionship. Chesterton asserted that the woman is more powerful than the average man because she enjoys the freedom of the home in her work, whereas the average man, if he frequently fails to comply with the orders to which he is subject, may find himself without employment.

The woman in the home cannot be anything but the universalist, Chesterton averred, because of the very nature of her duty in teaching children at a time when they are inquisitive about all things in their environment. Above all, Chesterton insisted that domesticity did not narrow a woman's life.

I cannot with the utmost energy of imagination conceive what they mean. When domesticity, for instance, is called drudgery, all the difficulty arises from a double meaning in the word. If drudgery only means dreadfully hard work, I admit the woman drudges in the home, as a man might drudge at the Cathedral of Amiens or drudge behind a gun at Trafalgar. But if it means that the hard work is more heavy because it is trifling, colourless and of small import to the soul, then as I say, I give up; I do not know what the words mean. To be Queen Elizabeth within a definite area, deciding sales, banquets, labours and holidays; to be Whiteley within a certain area, providing toys, boots, sheets, cakes and books; to be Aristotle within a certain area, teaching morals, manners theology, and hygiene; I can understand how this might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it.

How can it be a large career to tell other people's children about the Rule of Three, and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No; a woman's function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity her for its smallness. (5)

Chesterton defined woman as the star of the home and he was particularly concerned to have society recover the ideal of woman as a tower with many windows: the sign of the universalist.

VII DISTRIBUTISM: THE RESTORATION OF LIBERTY

Distributism, the movement initiated by Chesterton to restore liberty to the great majority of men who were industrial wage-earners in a system that considered them no more important than the machine, is based on one of the fundamental ideals: the right to possess private property. It is the ideal of private property which in the Distributist system is in direct opposition to the concept of private enterprise in the industrial system. Distributism would make men free once more; for it is only when men possess land upon which they can work to gain subsistence that they have a foundation from which they can challenge the practice of industry to employ them at less than a living wage: they are independent; they are free from exploitation in the labor market; they are dependent only upon the land which does not sate for profit as does an employer only too frequently. Distributism seeks to thwart what Belloc in The Servile State discovered to be a sociological drift whereby the poor, through capitalistic legislation, would ultimately become wards of a wealthy master class. The program was originally proposed as a balance between the two extremes of Capitalism and Communism. It is opposed to both because they result in the concentration of property and power in the hands of a few to the enslavement

of the many. Its claims rest upon the assumption that where there is property there is power; and it seeks to invest this power in the common man by a gradual and peaceful redistribution of land. In this way personal liberty will also be restored. The redistribution will be achieved by protecting and facilitating the ownership of individual enterprises in land, shops, and factories.

Essentially the Distributist program champions the cause of small shops and shopkeepers against multiple stores and trusts; the small landholder and farmer against the monopoly of large estates; individual craftsmanship and cooperation in industrial enterprises; and the maximum initiative on the part of the citizen. The special characteristic of the proposal is the insistence upon the liberty of the individual and the family against interference by monopolies or by the state.

The hope of the movement lies in the fact that small properties can and do exist, and that it is possible for them to remain small; that is, there is no necessity for combinations such as are formed by the aggressiveness of capitalism. Chesterton saw in the existence of peasantries to the present time the principle of well-distributed property applicable to all humanity. "The modern passion for incessant and restless buying and selling goes along

with the extreme inequality of men too rich and too poor." (1)
 It is the elimination of such abuses that Distributism will effect because its primary purpose insures the equality of men. Where men begin on an equal basis, it is possible for them to remain equal.

If one man has a hundred acres and another man has half an acre, ...there will be an economic tendency for him to sell his land. But if one man has thirty acres and the other man has forty acres, there is no economic tendency of any kind whatsoever to make the first man sell to the second. It is simply false to say that the first man cannot be secure with thirty or the second man cannot be content with forty. (2)

The prevention of land-grabbing is insured by the existence of a moral tradition. The morality of the program is the chief guarantee that the plan will work.

Property is a point of honour. And it is not true that a human being will sell what is sacred in the sense of self ownership, whether it be the body or the boundary. A few do it in both cases; and by doing it they always become outcasts. (3)

Chesterton contended that capitalism is undesirable because it is contradictory as soon as it is complete in the instance that it treats men oppositely at the same time and fails to provide adequately for the need of the common man. When men are wage-earners, it is difficult for them to be customers because the capitalist is always trying to cut down what his servants demand in wages, thus decreasing the

(1) Chesterton, G.K., THE OUTLINE OF SANITY, p. 17

(2) Ibid., p. 18

(3) Ibid., p. 21

spending power of customers in the laboring classes.

The endeavors of the Distributist Movement are summarized
 corently:

We are choosing between a peasantry that might succeed and a commerce that has already failed. We are trying to make suggestions about starting anew after a bankrupt business has really gone bankrupt...I think it not unlikely that in any case a simpler social life will return; even if it return by the road of ruin. I think the soul will find simplicity again, if it be in the Dark Ages. But we are Christians and concerned with the body as well as the soul...We do most earnestly desire a serious consideration of whether the transition cannot be made in the light of reason and tradition; whether we cannot yet do deliberately and well what nemesis will do wastefully and without pity..." (4)

Chesterton presented his Distributism in the nature of a basic remedy, but he did not insist that the entire social structure must be a Distributist entity. Rather he maintained that there should be a goodly proportion of Distributists throughout the social order in order to insure a balance between the overcentralization of monopoly and the domination of state ownership.

I do not think that a community arranged on the principles of Distributism and on nothing else would be a perfect community. All admit that the society that we propose is more a matter of proportion and arrangement than a perfectly clear system in which all production is pooled and the result given out in wages. The man

who ~~owns~~ a piece of land controls it in a direct and real sense. He really owns the means of production. It is the same with a man who owns a piece of machinery. He can use it or not use it. Even a man who owns his own tools or works in his own workshop to that extent owns and controls the means of production. (5)

The problem of social reform, according to the Distributist analysis, is divided into two parts: first, to arrest the concentration toward mad monopoly; and secondly, to inspire a normal society with ideals with which it may maintain its normalcy. Chesterton believed that, since in the past all economic decisions were won by plutocratic monopoly, one real defeat would have an incalculable effect, and as each group or family experienced the benefits of private property, there would be a popular movement initiated in the hope of attaining economic independence and balance. As the difficulty involved a breakdown of machinery and not of men, Chesterton favored the adaptation of his program to suit individual needs, and encouraged variation in methods of attaining the Distributist ideal. In this the liberty of the individual was protected; but the important objective was to check monopolistic tendencies before it was too late for men to be free.

The compensation provided by Distributism resided in the fact that, rather than rob the wealthy to give the poor

(5) Chesterton, G.K., and Shaw, G.B., DO WE AGREE?, p. 23

status (as Chesterton asserted the rich had exploited the poor) the plan would restore a balance, an economic proportion throughout the society. This would, however, be a gradual process; for it was only by degrees that perfection of the plan could be accomplished.

We do not offer perfection; what we offer is proportion. We wish to correct the proportions of the modern state; but proportion is between varied things; and a proportion is hardly ever a pattern. It is as if we were drawing the picture of a living man and the opponents thought we were drawing the diagram of wheels and rods for the construction of a Robot. We do not propose that in a healthy society all land should be held in the same way; or that all property should be owned on the same conditions; or that all citizens should have the same relation to the city. It is our whole point that the central power needs lesser powers to balance and check it, and that these must be of many kinds: some individual, some communal, some official, and so on. Some of them will probably abuse their privilege; but we prefer the risk to that of the State or of the Trust, which abuses its omnipotence. (6)

Big business Chesterton considered bad not only morally because of its negative effect on society, but also in a mercantile sense. In discussing the "bluff of the big shops" he indicated that they were a convenience only to the owners who derived profit from them. The public is attracted to the larger establishments and discouraged from trading with smaller shops because of two pernicious practices of monied monopoly: advertising and urging the need for immediate purchase, such as discount sales. Above all, Chesterton

detested the fatalistic attitude taken toward monopoly as a case of the big fish eating the little fish. He challenged the invulnerable reputation of monopoly on the ground that it was the result of an uncontrolled activity which, with effort, could be modified. Among the methods advanced for making the ideal of Distributism a reality was a plan of gradual extension of profit sharing, or the management of large business organizations by a guild, or group, clubbing contributions and dividing results. This is the method preferred by Chesterton, though he approved a nationwide system of production in which every citizen would receive a dividend.

The proposals which would aid the process of Distributism included:

- (1) The taxation of contracts so as to discourage the sale of small property to big proprietors and encourage the breakup of big property among small investors.
- (2) Something like the Napoleonic testamentary law and the destruction of primogeniture.
- (3) The establishment of free law for the poor, so that small property could always be defended against great.
- (4) The deliberate protection of certain experiments in small property, if necessary, by tariffs.
- (5) Subsidies to foster the starting of such experiment.
- (6) A league of voluntary dedication, and similar organizations. (7)

Chesterton believed that when little shops began to gain the majority of transactions in buying and selling the

big shops would lose customers. Thus the centripetal tendency in commercial activity would be slowed down and the resultant condition would foster the development of a centrifugal movement which would favor the ordinary citizen because it would lead toward decentralization. This also would be advantageous to the state, for it would satisfy the need of the majority so that they would be insusceptible to socialistic or communistic proposals and immune to the social security legislation designed by the rich, which Chesterton believed led to the Servile State. It is in a distributed number of small proprietors that Chesterton saw the possibility for a general settlement between management and labor as a result of which the world would once again be a land fit for Christian living. It is in the Christian concept of property as a trust to man for his best use that Chesterton found the substantiation for his ideal of small property. Industrial property would be protected by a voluntary organization, the guild, through which small craftsmen could govern themselves, free and independent of state control.

Capitalistic combination resulted in the malicious trust-dominated monopoly which prevented free and private enterprise. Consequently, Chesterton would punish monopolists in the same way in which cornering would have been treated in the Middle Ages when it was classified with counterfeiting

in degree of criminal intent. This is another instance in which Chesterton refers to medieval times, particularly the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for a working model for his Distributism. There he found a higher type of justice which was administered in fairness to the common man rather than the modern judicial tendency to discriminate against the poor. Chesterton asserted that the industrial conspiracies were not punished because rich and poor were unequal before the law.

That is the reason why we do not treat Trust magnates and monopolists as they would be treated under the old laws of popular justice...It is a question of economic law...It is a lie to say that we cannot make a law to punish monopolists, or pillory monopolists, or hang monopolists if we choose...Our fathers did before us. And in the same sense it is a lie to say that we cannot help buying the best advertised goods or going to the biggest store or falling in, in our general social habits, with the general social trend...Arresting a forceful man is as simple as walking out of a shop...Practically about half of the recognized expedients by which a big business is now made have been marked down as a crime in some community of the past; and could be so marked in a community of the future...There is a policy of deliberately selling at a loss to destroy another man's market. ...the trick of tying a poorer man in a tangle of all sorts of obligations that he cannot ultimately discharge except by selling his shop or business. All these conspiracies I would have tried as we try a conspiracy to overthrow the State or to shoot the King...We shall never have real civic sense until it is once more felt that the plot of three citizens against one is a crime, as well as the plot of one citizen against three. In other words, private property ought to be protected against private crime just as public order is protected against private judgment. It needs defence against the rich, who are now generally

the rulers who ought to defend it... (8)

Chesterton's ideal would be, in a sense, a compromise; but, in reality, it would be a balance, for it would contain different types of people holding different types of land on different tenures. While the medieval state had its peasants, its monasteries, its common land, its private land, and its guilds, Chesterton would have his state one in which some things would be nationalized, some machines owned corporately, some guilds sharing common profits, and some independent workshops. Individual and absolute owners would be the standard and would set the tone for the entire social structure because the peasant constitutes the only positive basis for resistance in a struggle between bolshevism and the historic ideal of property. Then, too, the man who owns his own land and works his own land is both landlord and laborer combined; consequently, he will give a maximum of effort to his work because he will receive the benefits of his labor in contrast to the industrial wage-earner who receives a mere pittance. To the critics of his policy Chesterton replied:

I know that many would call the conservatism by coarser names; and say that peasants are stupid and stick-in-the-mud and tied to a dreary existence. I know it is said that a man must find it monotonous to do the twenty things that are done on a farm whereas, of course, he always finds it uproariously funny and festive to do one thing hour after hour and day after day in

a factory. I know that the same people also make exactly the contrary comment and say it is selfish and avaricious for the peasant to be so intensely interested in his farm instead of showing, like the proletariat of modern industrialism, a selfless and romantic loyalty to somebody else's factory, and an ascetic self-sacrifice in making profits for somebody else. Giving each of the claims of modern capitalism their due weight, it is still permissible to say that in so far as the peasant proprietor is certainly tenacious of his peasant property...is concentrated on the interest or content with the dullness...He does constitute a solid block of private property which can be counted on to resist communism, which is not only more than can be said of the proletariat, but is very much more than any capitalists can say of them. ...Large properties cannot prevent communism whereas small properties can. (9)

The modern, with what Chesterton termed a most narrow concept of peasantry, mildly dismissed its desirability because of a supposed inherent dullness. At the same time the rise of the proletariat was championed with great optimistic gestures and prophecy regarding its strength in producing a culture embracing arts and sciences. This fallacy Chesterton strove most actively to eradicate.

All experience is against the assertion that peasants are dreary and degraded...All over the world there are peasant dances, like dances of kings and queens. The popular dance is much more stately and ceremonial and full of human dignity than is the aristocratic dance...All over Europe peasants have produced the embroideries and the handicrafts which were discovered with delight by artists when they had long been neglected by aristocrats. These peasants...conserve customs

that do not perish like fashion and crafts less ephemeral than those artistic movements which so very soon cease to move. The Bolsheviks...have invented something which they call Proletarian Art....There has never been any such thing as Proletarian Art. But there has most emphatically been such a thing as Peasant Art...Peasants have produced art because they were communal but not communist. Custom and a corporate tradition gave unity to their art; but each man was a separate artist. It is that satisfaction of the creative instinct in the individual that makes the peasantry as a whole content and therefore conservative. (10)

In order to realize the Distributist aim Chesterton indicated that education should play a vital role in teaching the poor of the city slums the essentials of country life. Only in this way would many of them, who had no real idea of what the country could give to them, begin to have a desire to leave the town with its narrowness and assume the duties of responsible citizens as peasant proprietors. There was to be no force used upon the destitute, because the method was a medieval moral one and relied solely upon a call for volunteers who appreciated the difficulties of beginning again in the country. Above all, Chesterton did not wish optimism and the visions of a Utopia-for-the-asking to dim the enthusiasm and honesty and success of a popular appeal. People would join the Distributist movement only because of their voluntary act, not because they were inveigled into it by a scheming advertising, such as

(10) Ibid., p. 129

capitalistic monopoly employed for its exploitation of the masses.

Great assistance could be given by the government in this movement for the restoration of property rights to the common man.

There is nothing in our social philosophy that forbids the use of state power where it can be used. And either by state subsidy or some large voluntary fund, it would still be possible at least to give the other man something as good as the rent he does not get... It seems within the resources of civilization to enable Brown to buy from Smith what is now of very little value to Smith and might be of very great value to Brown...I do think a subsidy to restore agriculture would find more repayment in the future than a subsidy to patch up the position of coal; just as in its turn it is more defensible than half a hundred salaries that we pay to a mob of nobodies for plaguing the poor with sham science and petty tyranny...The state could help...by state education. (11)

Chesterton believed that, among all the proposals for undoing the evils of capitalism, his Distributist program was the only one which would really succeed. He saw the others, in reality, as plans for overdoing the evils of capitalism. He had faith that his proposals would be successful because his policy was built upon the concept of the common man. Rather than standardize all men into one citizen type, it aimed to make it possible for them to become independent

(11) Ibid., p. 141

in economic pursuits. He did not approve of a system based entirely on the modern division of labor which he called half-witted. He proposed, instead, the ideal life of the peasant as one, not only simple, but complete. The city he considered defective because in it there was a complete absence of the core of simple consciousness represented by the peasant.

What is wrong with the man in the modern town is that he does not know the causes of things; and that is why, as Vergil says, we can be too much dominated by despots and demagogues...The more elaborate the town organization, the more elaborate even is the town education, and the less he is the happy man who knows the causes of things. But he does not protest very much because he cannot; and he cannot because he does not know enough about the causes of things--about the primary forms of property and production, or the points where man is nearest to his natural origins. ...When the townsman is equally well employed, he is not in this sense equally well informed. (12)

Basic to Chesterton's plan for Distributism is the essential element of self-sufficiency among the peasantry, for if the farmer grows produce solely to sell in the city, he will have but a partial experience. It is primarily required in the Distributist society that there be a group of citizens concerned in producing and consuming rather than in exchanging, because in this manner there will be a center of completeness as well as simplicity in which exchange and variation can then be given a reasonable place, just as they



were in the medieval fairs and markets. The center of civilization would then be independent in the sense of producing and consuming within its own social circle. In his admission that such a complete human life would not necessarily stand for a complete humanity, Chesterton asserted that the man who supplies his own needs and is independent of state control is, however, much needed to supply to modern civilization the unity it has lost. While it is unnecessary for everybody to observe the whole of any process in modern life, that is, to see the origin and consignment of every object in modern technocracy, there is a great need in society for some to whom the things they grew return. It is this type of person who knows the end and beginning and rounding of life that gives stability and balance to living. In other words, though the peasant's life is simple, he can better understand life than can the factory worker who, in the complexity of the modern industrial system, is unable to discover just where the source of economic inequalities exists, and consequently, struggles on in a narrow ignorance without arriving at the root cause of economic injustice. Unless the cause can be determined, the cure (remedy or reform) is not complete.

Chesterton maintained that it is necessary to begin at the beginning and consider the end, for in that way only is man using his mind. The aim of human polity is human happi-



ness, and is conditioned by the hope of larger happiness. Of all tests happiness, or the making glad of the human heart, is the only realistic and practical test. Thus there is no need for men to struggle to be richer, more efficient, more productive, more progressive, or more worldly unless they thereby attain greater happiness. It is this test of happiness that Chesterton applies to the machine and finds it does not measure up to the requirements for normal happiness. For that reason man is better off in a system where there is not too great dependence on the machine for the production of necessities. To Chesterton happiness is the objective to be realized, and it is irrelevant if in the attainment of this ideal men are made poorer, less productive, or less progressive. The requirement in the Distributist system would be to make men conscious not only of what they want and like, but of what they are trying to get. It is the error of the practical men of business, according to Chesterton, that they do not realize how greatly the machine has prevented human happiness. All thought on a new social direction must begin from the ultimate spiritual standard which constitutes the basis of all evaluation in Distributism.

The problem of the machine was simple for Chesterton. In cases where it is possible to effect its abolition, the chances for happiness are greatest; but the secondary method would consist of sharing the ownership of the machine,



the direction of its uses, and the distribution of profits derived. This sharing must not be a pooling, for the distribution would be incomplete. It is necessary also that there be no capitalistic patronage in the plan, and for this reason there must be a profit-sharing which begins at the popular end by means of local guilds. In short, industrial distributism, Chesterton believed, would gradually work toward the extinction of industrial monopoly.

By not getting good from inventions humanity has left the power to achieve happiness in the past. Thus, while machinery is not necessarily evil, modern society is overly mechanistic, a condition resulting in a thwarting of man's pursuit of happiness. Instead of the machine dwarfing the man, as in the concentration of modern commercialism, Chesterton would have the man a giant to whom the machine is but a toy. In this way only will the primary value be put on the ordinary man and the machine made subordinate to him. To the inventor the machine is an inspiration, but upon the masses it imposes a monotony and lifelessness that are cruel and subjugating. Where men are producing for their own consumption there is a great saving realized in the absence of the middleman, and in the distributist industrial system the vast expenditure between consumer and producer would be eliminated. Chesterton prophesied that a wiser society would eventually treat machines as they now treat weapons,



and would place machines under a central control in order that the infringement of uncontrolled industrialism could not jeopardize the happiness of men.

Because of the mechanistic quality of industrial civilization modern men were being stunted in human development and accomplishment, and Chesterton looked upon this with great intolerance.

We are not getting the best out of men. We are certainly not getting the most individual or the most interesting qualities out of men. And it is doubtful whether we ever shall, until we shut off this deafening din of megaphones that drowns their voices, this deathly glare of limelight which kills the colours of their complexions, this plangent yell of platitudes which stuns and stops their minds. All this sort of thing is killing thoughts as they grow...Nobody wants all men to be rustics even in normal times; it is very tenable that some of the most intelligent would turn to the towns even in normal times. But I say the towns themselves are the foes of intelligence, in these times;...the rustics themselves would have more variety and vivacity than is really encouraged by these towns. I say it is only by shutting off this unnatural noise and light that men's minds can begin again to move and to grow. Just as we spread paving-stones over different soils without reference to the different crops that might grow there, so we spread programs of platitudinous plutocracy over souls that God made various and simpler societies have made free. (13)

The immediate task, as Chesterton saw it, is to create the psychology of small property for the small proprietor, and this should be done by giving him the experience of small property. He believed that once this is accomplished, men can then decide how to control monopolies of public utilities (13) Ibid., p. 188

Machines, too, can be used as long as they create the psychology that can despise the machine. Even a Ford car may be useful if by using it to reach the country a man selects a small farm upon which to begin the peasant life, for then he might dismantle it and use the parts for tools. This, Chesterton averred, is using a scientific instrument properly as an instrument is only a means to an end. In this case the car led to proprietorship which in turn gave the man greater happiness.

Chesterton placed his social system as a bulwark between two forces he believed intensely harmful to the happiness of the common man: socialism and big business.

The prospect is a progress towards the complete combination of two combinations. They are both powers that believe only in combination; and have never understood or even heard that there is any dignity in division. They have never had the imagination to understand the idea of Genesis and the great myths: that Creation itself was division. The beginning of the world was the division of heaven and earth; the beginning of humanity was the division of man and woman. But these flat and platitudinous minds can never see the difference between the creative cleavage of Adam and Eve and the destructive cleavage of Cain and Abel. Anyhow, these powers or minds are not both in the same mood; and it is a mood of disliking all division, and therefore all distributions. They believe in unity, in unanimity, in harmony. One of these powers is State Socialism and the other is Big Business. They are already one in spirit; they will soon be one in body. For, disbelieving in division, they cannot remain divided; believing only in combination, they will themselves combine. At

present one of them calls is Solidarity and the other calls is Consolidation. It would seem we have only to wait while both monsters are taught to say Consoliderity. But, whatever it is called, there will be no doubt about the character of the world which they will have made between them. It is becoming more and more fixed and familiar. It will be a world of organization, of syndication, of standardization. People will be able to get hats, houses, holidays, and patent medicines of a recognized and universal pattern; they will be fed, clothed, educated, and examined by a wide and elaborate system. (14)

To insure the continuance of the Distributist society Chesterton advocated a religion of small property based on the sacredness of life. Man should have respect for soil because from it he is enabled to derive a livelihood. It is most important that he learn the happiness and contentment gained from being his own lord and master. This religion of small property must have reference to an ultimate view of the universe and the nature of man, for in this way a proprietor will take a modest pride in the privilege of ownership and assume the responsibility of a free man to his fellow men in their common journey of life. Chesterton would found this religion of small property upon the Christian moral tradition.

The old morality, the Christian religion, the Catholic Church, ...really believed in the rights of men. That is, it believed that ordinary men were clothed with powers and privileges and a kind of authority. Thus the ordinary man had a right to deal with dead matter up to a given point; that is the right

of property. Thus the ordinary man had a right to rule the other animals within reason; that is the objection to vegetarianism and many other things. The ordinary man had a right to judge about his own health and what risks he would take with the ordinary things of his environment...The ordinary man had a right to judge of his children's health and generally to bring up his children to the best of his ability; that is the objection to many interpretations of modern state education. Now in these primary things in which the old religion trusted a man, the new philosophy utterly distrusts a man...It is this profound scepticism about the common man that is the common point in the most contradictory elements of modern thought...In short, these, rightly or wrongly, cannot trust the normal men to rule in the home, and most certainly they do not want him to rule in the state. They do not really want to give him any political power. They are not willing to give him a house, or a wife, or a child, or a dog, or a cow, or a piece of land because these things really do give him power...Our policy is to give him power by giving him these things...A republic used to be called a nation of kings, and in our republic the kings really have kingdoms. (15)

Chesterton's vision was that of a commonwealth of free men--free because they have rights secured in the possession of property; free because they are equal in a social system where monopolies are outrooted; free because their very freedom is guaranteed and maintained through a fraternal effort to realize the ultimate end of human activity; free because they enjoy the happiness that springs from an environment especially built about the needs of human nature. In his philosophy of Distributism Chesterton advocated the ideal of Property in place of the quasi-ideal of Progress which is debilitating modern civilization. We took from

(15) Ibid., p. 255

the squalor and misery and monotony of the slums and factory the Common Man and enthroned him on a level of small proprietorship, bestowing upon him the power whereby he and his emancipated fellow human beings could achieve the ends destined for them at the beginning of time by the Creator of all. Distributism would provide a nation of little men made kings the kingdoms which are their rightful inheritance as the chief of creatures.

VIII

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE

Chesterton asserted the firm conviction that government must be government exercised by the people. To him there were only two kinds of social structure conceivable: personal government and impersonal government. He considered the former, with genuine democratic interest, by far the more suited to human needs. He believed that since government is inevitable it should be controlled by the people in order that it will not become an instrument of oppression. The need in government is regulation in accord with the requirements of the governed. "The elementary fact is that we were all born in a state...this is what is wrong. This is the huge modern heresy of altering the human soul to fit its conditions instead of altering human conditions to fit the soul." (1)

Chesterton observed that the first essential element in government was coercion, which he conceived as a necessary and noble function. Government did not rest on force, but government was force itself. In the past, he pointed out, this power rested on the consent of the people, and it was the people who had a common conception of justice. The king or the community, in its position as agent of the people, employed the general strength as a tool to crush out an abnormality which would have an evil effect on the common

(1) Chesterton, G.K., WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 107

welfare. The only sanction of government was the belief of the agent that whatever it did was right and just.

The two types of government which could adequately fit the requirements of effective government, according to Chesterton, were despotic government and democratic government because they are the only types which could establish an order universal and applicable. For his model of ideal government Chesterton reverted to the Middle Ages where he found the concept of man as an individual soul forming the basis of beneficent government. Chesterton recognized the impossibility of establishing a perfect order, but he believed that despotism and democracy more nearly approached that ideal. "To have a perfect system is impossible; to have a system is indispensable." (2) In so far as Chesterton's ideal democracy was concerned, it could be satisfied by any system under which the government was conducted in harmony with the general wishes of the people.

There is only a thin difference between good despotism and good democracy; both imply equality with authority, whether the authority be impersonal or personal. What both detest is oligarchy, even in its most human form of aristocracy, let alone its present repulsive form of plutocracy. (3)

Chesterton found reflection of democracy in the club habit. Democracy, which is in a sense arbitrament by anybody, he found exemplified in the club tendency to take a

(2) Chesterton, G.K., THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL, p. 44

(3) THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF G. K. CHESTERTON, p. 302

a total stranger too granted had to assume that certain things are inevitably as common to one person as to another.

His concept of democracy arose from the belief that it is founded on reverence for the common man because he is sublime. Its dream would make every man a king until the nation is a nation of kings. Chesterton held it is the real truth of a genuine republic that every man is fit to be a king and should be a king. This is the basis of his great insistence upon nationalism in preference to imperialism.

Next to democracy of such a character Chesterton asserted the most democratic form of government to be an hereditary despotism. This ideal of despotism would not be based upon qualifications of intelligence or special fitness. He deplored a system of rational or selective despotism as a curse to mankind because the despot chosen under such regulations would have no brotherly respect for men, which is the first requisite for successful government. A government would succeed only in so far as it provided for the needs of all its citizens without distinction or deference.

Government must meet the necessity of popular welfare. Chesterton would put an ordinary man at the head of the state because, being truly the average, he would be trusted by the majority and in fulfilling this trust would administer his duties in the best manner. "Hereditary despotism is in

passed

/and sentiment democratic because it chooses from mankind at random. If it does not declare that every man may rule, it declares the next most democratic thing; it declares that any man may rule." (4) Though hereditary despotism is good and beneficial, Chesterton looked with displeasure upon an hereditary aristocracy. By setting a numerous group of the populace aside in this manner, the chance for an intellectual aristocracy to arise within the social aristocracy was great. This could lead to a domination by the intellectual group over the social one, and the reins of government would devolve into the hands of a few. Thus the aim of government would be defeated, for this intellectual aristocracy would rule arbitrarily and government would no longer be responsive to the will of the people.

There is a need which Chesterton saw as requisite for the proper working of democracy, and it went beyond the need for a democratic system or a democratic philosophy. It is the need for the democratic emotion.

The democratic emotion, like most elementary and indispensable things, is a thing difficult to describe...in our enlightened age, for the simple reason that it is peculiarly difficult to find. It is a certain instinctive attitude which feels the things in which all men agree to be almost unspeakably unimportant. The nearest approach to it in our ordinary life would be the promptitude with which we should consider mere humanity in any circumstance of shock or death...This emotion which all of us have in connection with such things as birth

(4) Chesterton, G.K., *HERETICS*, p. 269

and death is to some people native and constant at all ordinary times and in all ordinary places. It was native to St. Francis of Assisi and to Walt Whitman. In this strange and splendid degree it cannot be expected to pervade a whole commonwealth or civilization; but one commonwealth may have it much more than another...one civilization much more than another. No community, perhaps, ever had it so much as the early Franciscans. (5)

Besides his insistence upon a democratic emotion, Chesterton claimed that the proof of a truly democratic state is the reality of an inclusive practice of ideal brotherhood. In such a state humanitarians and philanthropists would be unnecessary because, instead of deliberating the problem of the poor, the governing class would be wondering what action the poor would take upon the problem of those who govern. In other words, when the poor share with other groups equal participation in government, there will be no destitute; for a truly democratic state would be intolerant of the economic inconsistencies prevalent in modern industrial civilization.

Chesterton would have his ideal state intensely interested in nationalism. A true nationalism is not what is popularly connoted by the term, but a realization that government should function for the benefit of its citizens rather than to exploit other nations. For Chesterton it meant the correction of domestic inequalities and the creation of a state in which its citizens could

take just pride. Chesterton possessed a great love for small things and this found expression in his concept of nationalism. To him it meant anything but the contentious race to be the biggest materialistic power in the world. Instead, it meant the flowering of the small state to the broadness of outlook that would see each of its citizens as human beings in their true perspective as the most important creations on earth. By realizing this, respect for all and the property of all would lead to a respect for the rights of other nations. As in his Distributism, his nationalism is essentially a balance between the extremes of the "nationalism" of race and the imperialism of empire. The last thing a nation should be is an empire, for then it ceases to be a nation. Chesterton maintained that a nation should be more than a mere center of exchange for imports and exports. The nation should be one's country, and because of its very meaning, should be worthy enough to be regarded in the same respect as one's home.

This philosophy of nationalism was most vividly expressed in the novel and fantasy, The Napoleon of Notting Hill. In this book Chesterton proclaimed the right of small nations to existence by reducing the smallest nation conceivable to a mere space in Notting Hill. Within this neighborhood exist the primary requirements for human existence. Adam Wayne, an ardent idealist, is made the

defender of this small spot against the encroachments of neighboring principalities which have leagueed together to build a road that will facilitate travel in the region. Wayne takes exception to this and defies the intent of the other groups to make an incursion on his territory. Scorned by the others because he was impeding the progress of modernization, Wayne replies in words that express potently the strength of national pride: "Notting Hill is a rise, or high ground, of the common earth on which men have built houses to live, in which they are born, fall in love, pray, marry and die. Why should I think it so absurd?" (6)

To Chesterton that was the most important part of a nation--the part where the common man lives. For a nation to become an empire was to Chesterton an act of condescension. In all history, the origins of good things, he claimed, have been in small places that were within a limited geographic area like Nazareth and Athens. It is only where the organization is small that a balance in life and political outlook can be maintained. The interest of a country should be in its very life--its people--and not in far distant colonies that it only remotely controls, in Chesterton's estimation, for commercial exploitation.

For his ideal of nationalism Chesterton returned to the Middle Ages where men not only accepted the nation as a

(6) Chesterton, G. K., THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL, p. 114

social fact that were once conscious of the hegemony of Europe and the ultimate sovereignty of Christendom. Chesterton saw the beginnings of nationalism in the pride of the pilgrims in Thomas of Canterbury as England's own saint. From that time it has grown and expanded beyond Christian limitations until in the modern world it has developed into the "national paganism" that has deprived Europe of its common spiritual ideals.

Mr. Chesterton was one of the comparatively few people who had on the subject a clear and definable doctrine. He erected the sanctity of nationality into a religious dogma, and he denied the right of any nation or empire on the pretence of being more civilized, more progressive, more democratic, or more efficient, to take away from another nation its birthright of independence. This creed he opposed to defend alike against imperialistic and cosmopolitan critics. (7)

Chesterton argued that true patriotism recognized the great quality of a nation rather than the quantity. He said that the true patriot would never overestimate the exploits of his country, but would rather take pride in the fact that it has been the environment from which he had drawn in his day-to-day living. The nation should not be prized for its expansiveness but for the fact that it fosters the smallest unit in society, the family, and therefore, protects the individual from the beginning of his life.

(7) Anonymous, G.K.CHESTERTON: A CRITICISM, p. 41

Patriotism exists in a certain unilluminated reality. It is not confused with all kinds of other things. A child speaking of his country or his village may make every mistake in Waddington or tell every lie in Munchausen, but in his statement there will be no psychological lies any more than there can be in a good song. Adam Wayne, as a boy, had for his dull streets in Notting Hill the ultimate and ancient sentiment that went out to Athens or Jerusalem. He knew the secret of the nation, those secrets which made real old national songs sound so strange to our civilization. He knew that real patriotism tends to sing about sorrows and forlorn hopes much more than about victory. He knew that in proper names themselves is half the poetry of all national poems. Above all, he knew the supreme psychological fact about patriotism, as certain, that the patriot never under any circumstances boasts of the largeness of his country, but always, and of necessity, of the smallness of it. (8)

Government, in Chesterton's opinion, should never indulge in extravagances like imperialism, for it is a fallacy that good is created by empire. While some claimed the talents of the subject peoples were absorbed by unification, Chesterton proved that there was neither an absorption of talent nor a unification, and he frequently cited instances in which the white men looked down upon not only his dark brethren but subjugated white men as well. Empires do not absorb the great qualities of the nations they control.

Why did we know so much about German mythology, and nothing about Irish mythology? Any person with even the simplest knowledge of the world as it is must realize that the reason lies in the fact that our material conquest of Ireland put us in an utterly artificial position towards anything Irish.

The Irish would not sing to us any more than the Jews, as described in their storn and splendid psalm, would sing to the Babylonians. I find it difficult to believe that there can be anyone so ignorant of practical experience as not to know that any attempt on the part of the Irish for centuries after their conquest to say to us what they had to say about their history and legends would have been met with nothing except jokes about Brian Boroo. We all know in reality that England would never have consented to learn from Ireland. It has learnt from France because it failed to conquer her. If Edward III or Henry V had succeeded in adding France to the Empire, we may be absolutely certain that we should have learnt as little from the Song of Roland as we have from the Legend of Maive, and that we should have profited as little from the genius of Mira-beau as we did from the genius of Parnell. (9)

The only point in empir , Chesterton averred, was exploitation, and this was against the Christian expansion which Chesterton held ideal. If there be penetration into other nations it should be that of missionaries of the Christian way of life, and not that of avid profiteers extending the vices of an inhuman commercialism. "Imperialism in its common patriotic pretentions appears to me both weak and perilous. It is an attempt of a European country to create a kind of sham Europe which it can dominate instead of a real Europe which it can only share. (10) A government which embarks upon imperialism sails under a glaring flag of false idealism which is both weak and dangerous because it fosters local discontent, the one thing government should avoid at all costs.

(9) Anonymous, G.K.CHESTERTON, A CRITICISM, p. 45f

(10) G.K.Chesterton, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, p. 85

Chesterton's ideal government would be a democracy which recognizes the need of all the people even to the most miserable individual and makes for all its citizens a true balance and equality in all spheres of endeavor. It would insure liberty of conscience and realize the ideals of brotherhood. The second best form of government would be that of an hereditary despot who was in direct contact with, and responsive to, the needs of his people, and who would act unflinchingly in their interests. There should be no aristocracy lest within that body an intellectual oligarchy arise and enforce its will on the people at the expense of the common welfare. There would be no policy of economic imperialism, and the government should be nationalistic, for it is only in the recognition of one's own national limitations that one will respect the rights of other nations. The only sanction for one nation to influence another would be in the extension of Christianity as a mutual benefit for all by its giving to all nations a common way of life. No nation should consider itself superior to others, for in the Christian concept all men are brothers.

IX

WAR AND PEACE

Chesterton is esteemed for his clarity of vision in discussing the problems of war and peace. His views on the two subjects are combined in this chapter because they are, ^{out} in a sense, connected by nature; for, as Chesterton pointed^d, the aim of war is peace. He was among the first to recognize the evils of Hitlerism, and from the mid twenties to his death in 1936 he made a number of predictions concerning the course of events which are remarkable because the most of them have already materialized. It is, therefore, wise to note the evaluation of problems concerning the peace; for one who was so accurate in forecasts must indeed have possessed more than the usual power of judgment.

Chesterton averred that the only defensible war is a war of defense. "A war of defence by its very definition and nature is one from which a man comes back battered and bleeding and boasting only that he is not dead." (1) Referring to World War I, he scored the popularization of the War That Will End War on the basis that it is like telling a reluctant workman that his work is the Work That Will End Work. The whole promise is one that could never be fulfilled any more than a promise to end all work and worry. War was necessary because the alternative was worse than war. This

(1) AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF G.K.CHESTERTON, p. 253

fact, Chesterton maintained, should have been recognized and publicized rather than the slogan which deluded too many of the allied public. The defense of a country's prestige and independence against an "inhuman and heathen hegemony" like Prussia was just. "But I am far from certain that a War to End War would have been just. I am far from certain that, even if anybody could prevent all protest under arms, offered by anybody anywhere under any provocation, it would not be an exceedingly wicked thing to do." (2)

Chesterton was among those attending the conference of all English men of letters called at the outbreak of World War I to compose a reply to the manifesto of German Professors. At that time, and throughout the war, he wrote many pamphlets against Prussia in violent denunciation of that threat to world harmony. In his Autobiography he stated that, unlike so many others, he did not write in the heat of indignation, but his opinions were rationally formed previous to the war and were not altered in the post-war reaction. In the main, the causes leading to World War I were synonymous with those precipitating World War II; for, as Chesterton asserted, the enemy was never really conquered: only an armistice was signed.

For Chesterton "the only necessary wars were the wars of religion" (3) and it is on this basis that he proved that

(2) Ibid., p. 254

(3) Chesterton, G.K., THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL, p. 119

Wars like World War I and World War II are necessary. Europe was built in the Christian tradition and Chesterton insisted that it is solely Christianity which has made possible the civilization superior to that of any pagan culture. In the midst of the Christian entity arose a barbaric, or semi-converted, force which threatened to overwhelm and enslave the Christian nations of the Continent. The source of this subversive aggression, asserted Chesterton, was the chief source of all sin--pride. In the case of Prussia it was a pride stemming from an egotistical nature rather than from the pagan beginnings of the Germanic peoples.

Chesterton was among the first of allied journalists to break the myth that the Germans were a collection of lawless barbarians destroying the earth and all things upon it.

We should be more likely to say that the German was a meek, milk, obedient person, incapable of doing anything except what he was told to do. The real question was...who told him to do it. The answer to that is a fundamental fact of modern history and explains why we talk of the Armistice and not the Peace. (4)

The evil Chesterton preferred to call pride rather than Prussia because he considered it spiritual in nature. "It is a heresy. It is an ideal outside the European ideal; outside of what most of us would call the normal human ideal. It is something alien to Europe which Europe cannot digest and did not destroy." (5) Chesterton averred that while the

(4) Chesterton, G.K., THE END OF THE ARMISTICE, p. 17

(5) Ibid., p. 18

civilized and religious man would admit something in existence beside himself, the barbaric and anti-social man could see only a concentration of energies to assist in the accomplishment of his aims. The civilized man would recognize this outer force and would not feel his dignity lowered if it tended to work against the achievement of his motives. The Prussians, being filled with pride, are selfish and can recognize no standard outside themselves.

The test of civilization is humility, a Christian virtue which Chesterton maintained is necessary to world peace. He believed that the intense pride of kind exhibited by the Prussians an unnatural thing which is expanding wildly without check from the Christian nations. The nearest it came to interruption was at Jena when Napoleon almost annihilated it. The growing menace of Hitlerism Chesterton saw as the climax of the psychology of pride, for the Germans in seeking justification for their actions and desires were taught to appeal to neither God nor man, but only to Germany.

The immediate cause of Hitlerism was a "botched" peace which was composed, according to Chesterton, by a heartless American professor and an English demagogue. The most serious mistake at Versailles was the destruction of what was left of the Christian tradition among Germanic peoples. He most heartily approved of the idealism provoking the

League of Nations, but he saw it actually as a diplomatic "club" for pacifists, lacking any vestige of authority to enforce its decisions and without dignity among the nations of the world. The one redeeming action of the delegates at Versailles was the restoration of Poland as a nation. While the aim of the conference presumably was to restore small nationalities, it did not fulfil its promise in the treatment of Hungary which, in Chesterton's opinion, was a human place and was used more unfairly than was inhuman Prussia. The Black and Tan decimation in Ireland Chesterton saw as a direct contradiction to the doctrine of protection for small nationalities, but he attributed this to the fact that, like the treatment of Hungary, it was managed by practical businessmen who, he claimed, represent the height of inconsistency. The failure at Versailles was due to inability to see Europe in true perspective, the failure to recognize that there is an unconverted and uncivilized force in Christendom which is not Christian. Chesterton maintained that as long as this force is left improperly controlled there will continue to be conflict on earth.

Chesterton looked forward to this present war with the hope that the allies, especially England, would not begin with self-righteous propaganda, but would face the shortcomings in their own attitude toward the problem of humanizing Prussia. He saw the depression following the last

war as a great historical judgment and rebuke of fate to nations too susceptible to artificial, mercantile and mechanical culture. "It is a fine thing to be swift to forgive our enemies; but it is a finer thing not to be too eager to forgive ourselves...In so far as modern man can face facts frankly, all nations will be worthy to find peace or fitted to face war." (6)

The Prussian perversion of pride in race Chesterton cited as beginning not in the heathen mythology, which he claimed was only an acceptable reinforcement of Prussian policy, but in the historic meeting of two infamously famous men, Frederick the Great of Prussia and Voltaire. From that acquaintance two destructive elements were released which many times catapulted the social order into conflict.

The meeting of these two men, in the mid-winter of eighteenth century scepticism and secularism, is a sort of spiritual marriage which brought forth the modern world...But because that birth was monstrous and evil, and because true friendship and love are not evil, it did not come into the world to create one united thing, but two conflicting things, which between them were to shake the world to pieces. From Voltaire the Latins were to learn a raging scepticism. From Frederick the Teutons were to learn a raging pride...They were cosmopolitans; they were not in any sense patriots. But there is a difference; that the patriot does, however stupidly, like the country; whereas the cosmopolitan does not in the least like the cosmos.

Voltaire, even at his best, really began that modern mood that has blighted all the humanitarianism he honestly supported. He started the horrible habit of helping human

beings only through picking them and never through respecting them. Through him the oppression of the poor became a sort of cruelty to animals; and the loss of that mystical sense that to wound the image of God is to insult the ambassador of a King. Nevertheless, I believe that Voltaire had a heart; I think that Frederick was most heartless when he was most humane.

These two great sceptics met on the level, on the dead solid plain, as dull as the Baltic Plain; on the basis that there is no God, or no God who is concerned with men any more than with mites in cheese. On this basis they agreed; on this basis they disagreed: their quarrel was personal and trivial, but it ended by launching two European forces against each other, both rooted in the same unbelief. Voltaire said, in effect, "I will show you that the sneers of a sceptic can produce a Revolution and a Republic and everywhere the overthrowing of thrones." And Frederick answered, "And I will show you that this same sneering scepticism can be used as easily to resist Reform, let alone Revolution; that scepticism can be the basis of support for the most tyrannical of thrones, for the bare brute domination of a master over his slaves. So they said farewell and have since been sundared by two centuries of war; they said farewell, but presumably did not say "adieu".

Voltaire had produced hypocritical and venous professional politicians at whom he would have been the first to jeer.

....But the root of both provocations is in the common ground of radical irresponsibility; there was nothing to stop the sceptic from turning democracy into secrecy; there was nothing to stop him interpreting liberty as the infinite license of tyranny. The spiritual zero of Christendom was at that freezing instant when those two dry, thin, hatchet-faced men looked into each other's eyes and saw the sneer that was as eternal as the smile of a skull. Between them, they have nearly killed the thing for which we live. (7)

Chesterton considered the educators of Victorian England responsible to a large degree for the animosity with which his countrymen regarded the menace of Prussianism before the first World War. English professors had been intrigued with the theory of Nietzsche and the equally irrelevant "cousin" theory concerning the British and the Germans. Historically, Chesterton asserted, Britain is a nation deriving culture from many other nations, and there is so little similarity between modern Britain and modern Germany that the claim of kinship is unjustified. Even if it were justifiable, the British concept of modern Germanic culture was erroneous; for the national super-pride of Germany stemmed from an influence in the true German Empire. Prussia was essentially Slavic in origin and only by force had succeeded in dominating the northern provinces and principalities in the Holy Roman Empire which was infused with the ideals of Christianity. Chesterton considered Austria as the scene of the flowering of Christian culture and cited Dollfuss, torn between the encroachment of Hitlerism from without and the treachery of communists from within his country, a hero and martyr to the Christian cause.

The delegates at Versailles misunderstood the fact that traditional monarchy, whether good or bad, is not necessarily barbaric nor militaristic. Though nations within the Austrian Empire were denied independence, they were not

denied liberty by a tolerant government. Prussia and Russia, however, like all new powers, Chesterton implied, were tyrannical. While Austria-Hungary was a muddle of many things, its elements were not in a constant state of discord as were the Prussian and the Pole. While Chesterton approved redistribution of nationalities within the Empire, he disclaimed the injustice imposed upon Hungary but attributed the entire blunder to the failure to comprehend the difference between the Austro-Hungarian compromise and the Prussian and Russian coercion. The complete and feasible solution should have been a weakened Prussia and a strengthened Austria.

We shall go on making those ghastly blunders and paying for them so long as the ideal of modern culture is concerned with what is called Progress, or the Future, or what somebody guesses about what nobody knows, what will happen the day after tomorrow; so long as men are accounted cultured and enlightened if they talk of what will happen next month, though they are comically ignorant of what did happen last week; in short, so long as being enlightened means looking for what will happen next, and being more blind than the beasts that perish to everything that has happened already. (8)

Chesterton considered Prussia the real enemy of Germany and indicated that the mechanical discipline of this "pedantic barbarian" covered something utterly unbalanced and barbaric in the soul. This he called upon all people to ponder and asked them not to cease to think of it in the midst of the war which he foresaw (World War II), for

(8) Ibid., p. 42

real victory, he said, is won only in thinking before, during, and after the battle, and not by fighting alone. A thinking man was to Chesterton the only true and genuine citizen.

The German shortcoming he attributed to a lack of independent thinking. He saw them as complete victims of mass hysteria, brooding, bragging, egoistic, and filled with self-pity. In many other ways genial, hospitable, and human, in respect to wisdom in choice of leadership the German is defective; for he permits a Slavic Prussia to impress itself by sheer insolence into the Germanic simplicity; and Chesterton asserted, this impressment, under delusions of grandeur, has led the German beyond reason, beyond the critical limits of self-criticism. It is this faculty of self-analysis which Chesterton averred the world must regain if it is to maintain the balance necessary for the promulgation of peace.

The problem is a problem of human will; of human motives and morals, and therefore of human souls. It is the souls of nations that we have, as best we may, to weigh in the balance; to try to be just to them, or even sympathetic with them; to understand where their spiritual energies diverge from our own, and not to judge them merely by whether they are convenient or inconvenient to our own. It is a difficult thing to do; but the alternative to difficulty is disaster. It requires imagination; that most strenuous and staggering sort of imagination which can see what is really there; where a weaker imagination always sees its own image everywhere.

The first difficulty is that in feeling the true atmosphere of foreign nations it is so easy to fall into the habit of comparing

them unfavourably with our own nation. It will be well before criticising another people to make it a sort of religious exercise to remember what could be said against our own people. (9)

The Nazis did many things which earned the condemnation of civilized nations but, in Chesterton's opinion, they committed one supreme and historically fatal error: they answered critics by praising themselves. Hitler himself was not dictator, alleged Chesterton, but was dominated by the Prussian Junkers whose spokesman he became through appealing to their vanity by deceit and flattery. He viewed the Nazis as a contradictory group that try to suppress everything unfavorable to them and, if unsuccessful in the attempt, negotiate a complete turnabout by doing everything which they could not suppress. In breaking his political promises to smaller nations, Hitler was only imitating his political predecessor, Frederick the Great, who, Chesterton asserted, taught the first lesson in treacherous Prussian diplomacy by seizing Silesia which he had promised to protect for the widowed Empress of Austria. It was the assassination of Dollfuss which precipitated a violent denunciation from Chesterton upon the treachery of Prussianism not only to the German people but also to organized Christian Europe.

Dollfuss tells the tale of ten or twelve centuries; and all that has happened since Rome became a reality for the southern Germanies, and especially for the people of the Danube, while it was still only a rumour, or at best a romance, for the more northern tribes. He

(9) Ibid., p. 55

stood for the fact that Germans were not barbarians, that they had been baptised and civilised, and that for centuries their centre was Vienna. To the north and east of them there lay a race of men who have always had the simple, single and unchanging object of proving that the Germans are not civilized and not Christian. And, to do them justice, it must be admitted that during the last few centuries they have been rather successful in proving their thesis. Prussia set out to prove the theory that Germans are by nature barbarians. Of course, a number of other words were actually used: that the Germanic spirit was free from Judaic and Papist influences; that the German blood guaranteed an emancipation from Latin and Semitic superstitions; and so on. But what it meant was that Teutons like to be barbaric and are going to be as barbaric as they like. Against this slander upon a European race there stood up one permanently standing contradiction; and its name was Austria. Everybody knew that Vienna was a place of culture and tradition like Paris and Rome. The thought that any Germans anywhere could have condescended to common courtesy, to humanity, nay (more horrible still) to humility, filled the half-heathen Teutons of the north with that sort of furious and hungry hatred with which the inferior always regards the superior. The Nazi movement in Austria was quite simply a movement to barbarise Austria; to unbaptise Austria. (10)

Chesterton spoke with great vehemence upon the most serious phase of the Hitlerian menace. He denounced the theory of race as a religion which nourished pride and cultivated something worse than pride: the intense and negative nationalism in which one claims as territory any land in which a countryman might be living. Until

(10) Ibid., p. 82f

every nation regards nationalism in a positive way there will never be peace. If the world would be at peace Chesterton saw a need for the interpretation of nationalism as respect for other nations in order to secure respect for one's own nation. Above all Chesterton denounced any system that would maintain peace by a "police force" of strong powers or by the "sphere of influence" plan, for this would mean a subjugation or obeisance of small nations, and the larger nations would influence world affairs arbitrarily. Chesterton maintained that peace was something from within and must not be enforced by an outside agency, in which case it would be but an artificial peace. It must be achieved through mutual respect of all nations for the rights and dignity of one another.

The problem of the Jews Chesterton observed was created by them when they were a dominating influence in German education, for they added to the Prussian tribal pride, already inflated by deGobineau, the Biblical tradition of the Chosen Race. This was, said Chesterton, their error. However, he prodigiously condemned the persecution of the Jews and praised them for a family loyalty which could be profitably taught to many moderns who are unconscious of the value of the home except as a hat-stand. The chief shortcoming of the Jews, he averred, is their reluctance to adapt themselves to the nation in which they live; for in

nearly all countries they constitute a "nation within a nation," and this is the root of the trouble. Chesterton was a Crusader for Jewish national rights and viewed the Zionist movement in his The New Jerusalem as the solution to this problem. Upon his death, he was praised by a Jewish leader for his directness and frankness in clarifying the issues in the Nazi treatment of Jews. The concept of Aryan superiority Chesterton defined as a ^{an} ~~bur~~sey of license and/undefined creed; in short, it was "Anthropology gone mad." (11)

Chesterton attributed the threat of Japanese supremacy in the East to the adoption by those people of the most undesirable tendencies of western civilization, especially the inclination to develop militarism. The problem of peace in the East would be solved, Chesterton asserted, when the ideals of Christianity are not only taught but preached by white and yellow alike.

The ideal of world peace would be realized, Chesterton indicated, when all nations face the problems involved in controversy in a clear, unbiased manner. Specifically, he called for maintenance of Polish independence to prevent the spread of Prussianism eastward for an alliance with communistic Russia. In alliance both countries, controlled by forces alien to Christian Europe, would lead to an intensif-

(11) Ibid., p. 103

lation of activity subversive to European Christianity. The two forces which Chesterton would abolish from within every nation are cynicism and pacifism, each of which lead to a distortion of fact by means of propaganda. These Chesterton would eradicate. In his concept of an ideal society there would be no dissemination of pacifist doctrine and no defeatism of cynicism. There would be a realization that war is sometimes necessary.

We do not hold, no sane man has ever held, that war is a good thing. It is better that men should agree than that they should disagree; it is better that they disagree peacefully than that they should fight. Thus far we go with the most ardent, unconditional pacifist. The horrors and abominations of war are not likely to be invoked. But we hold that occasion may arise when it is better for a man to fight than to surrender. War is, in the main, a dirty, mean, inglorious business, but it is not the direst calamity that can befall a people. There is one worse state, at least: the state of slavery. While the possibility of slavery remains, while it merges daily into the imminent probability, it is more important to teach men the value of manhood than to preach the softer virtues of peace. (12)



Chesterton was noted for his optimism, and this characteristic view rested in the ardent hope that all men would eventually progress towards the Christian ideal of brotherhood of all men. Acknowledging that among the cultures heathen/there are many virtues, Chesterton asserted that there was one virtue peculiar only to Christianity, the essential one through which the road to achieving Peace to Men of Goodwill must pass, and that is the greatest of all virtues: Humility. This was the essence of the Christian revolution in the social order.

There was this definite thing about the best Pagan; that in him dignity did mean pride. Christianity was a change that stood alone and was worthy to stand alone. For humility was the greatest psychological discovery that man has made since man has sought to know himself. It was the stupendous truth that man does not know anything until he can not only know himself but ignore himself. He must subtract himself from the study of any solid and objective thing...But pride, which is the falsification of fact by the introduction of self, is the enduring blunder of mankind. Christianity would be justified if it had done nothing but begin by detecting that blunder. (1)

The enemy of world peace, Chesterton averred, is pride, because it confuses facts by confusing motives. Against this enemy the Christian social order must contend, for pride has superceded in destructive strength the "Lust that was called Liberty...and the Scorn that was

(1) Ibid., p. 218

called Scepticism." (2) In the Church Chesterton saw the only positive force competent to preserve what is left of democracy in a society infused with scepticism and cynicism. "A Pagan pride freed from democratic as well as from religious restraints is the next foe we have to face."

(2)

Chesterton was certain that the Hope of the World was the restoration and extension of the Christian ideals of social order because, no matter how severe the defeat, there has always been an energy in Christianity which has enabled its followers to recover and rise again. This resurrection is possible because there are no lost causes or hopeless loyalties. It is this hope and faith that humanity must recover if it is to achieve universal peace. The process will be gradual, continual, and certain as long as all men keep the goal of Christian brotherhood before them. In expressing and practicing an attitude of goodwill toward others, good will return to oneself. As this is true on a personal scale, so it is equally true on a national and international plane. Chesterton saw the reality of an ideal society only when all men and all nations seek the benefits of true and historic Christianity, which is the only truly universal system of living whereby equality of opportunity, dignity of person and property, liberty of conscience, and brotherhood of mankind are

(2) Ibid., p. 220

guaranteed.

It is the splendour of the hopeless hope, sometimes called the faraway hope, which has made the peculiar charm of Christmas. It has given us a place and time idea of romance; for the real romance was a combination of fidelity to the quest as a task with perpetual and enormous inequality to the task. And if anyone wishes to know what is really rooted in our religion and typical of our culture, he will find it in those late flowers and fruits which lay quite peacefully upon trees that were counted utterly stricken and dead through the long winters of recent centuries. He will see it in a flesh if he thinks for one moment how short a time separates the Irish Free State from the Irish Famine. And when I went to Poland and heard again the national march of the Poles, I told them that through their words I heard words that were old when all our songs were new, words which shall be new when all our songs are old: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." (3)

XI

CONCLUSION

Chesterton maintained that the chief requisite for an ideal society is the Christian way of life. It is this call for a return to Christianity and the Christian concept of man and state that Chesterton issued as an urgent appeal for a missing factor in our social order and all its ramifications from the individual to the nation. Only by adoption of the virtue of Humility can men or nations balance the defeats and victories of life so that they will be well-adjusted to harmonious living. Humility guarantees the dignity of all humanity from the smallest to the largest unit in the social order.

Christianity holds the most logical answer to the problem of world peace because it begins with a consideration of the dignity and importance of man as the highest form of living creature. This dignity and importance it preserves and maintains by insistence upon the superiority of man to any factor in his environment, because man, made unto the image and likeness of God, has been given the faculty of free will with which he can surmount any difficulties and make decisions apart from the dictates of any instinct. To accomplish reform in society, the naturalistic, cynical, and evolutionary theories which associate man by his nature more with animals than with the God who created him in His

image, must be recognized as the fallacies they are and removed as impediments to the progress of true social order.

Moderns have gone too close to the limits of scepticism and cynicism. Chesterton recognized this tendency as a path to chaos and anarchy. He called upon humanity to rebel, to revolt, and he fixed the beginnings of this revolution in the home, which is the center and mainstay of society. What the home teaches the nation will practice. If men would realize the immensity and importance of the task of the home, a great deal would already be achieved. This must be done by placing woman in the position designated for her by her nature; for woman is more fitted to rule despotically in insistence upon rightness in life than she is as a rate-crasher of man's world of commerce and industry. Modern women in seeking to escape the domesticity of which they have a warped concept, impede the recognition of labor to its right of adequate compensation.

Chesterton called also for a revision of the philosophy of education from one which viewed the process as evolving to the concept of education as a process of transmission of culture from the experienced to the innocent. In education he saw the need for dogmatic methods and advocated an abandonment of the fear of indoctrination, for he averred, as long as the child lives he will be influenced by one idea or another. In Chesterton's opinion it should be the

positive creed of Christianity in which the child must be indoctrinated.

Before an ideal society can exist, there must be a revolutionary change in the practice of capitalism, especially in its erroneous belief that individual enterprise means the right to organize monopolies for the increase of profit. Profits must be shared by the producers who are the workers, and for this Chesterton advocated management of industry by the workman. The chief aim in his economic policy, however, is Distributism which is essentially the restoration of liberty to the average man by the distribution of property. Chesterton had great faith in the ability of small things and advocated the creation of a peasantry of small land-owners, by state subsidy if necessary, as the foundation upon which the distribution of property would begin.

Distributism would also provide a needed balance between the twin evils of uncontrolled capitalism and communism and provide a means of stabilization by modifying the extremes of poverty and wealth. He championed man as the chief consideration in the economic order rather than the idolatry of money which, he believed, had sent modern society on the road to ruin. Distributism seeks to restore property to all men by giving them an opportunity to participate in private enterprise on a small and human level. Chesterton advocated the management of all industries by workers organ-

ized under a guild system. A pattern of industry to small shops was the ultimate aim of the program as applied to industrialism. The immediate aim was the insurance that the worker should share in the profits realized by his labor.

Government in an ideal society must become more responsive to the needs of the people. It could achieve this through a democracy in which the theory that all men are kings was applied, or it could be realized under an hereditary monarchy where the king acts despotically in the interests of his people. In any case, there must be no aristocracy, oligarchy, or plutocracy to influence governmental policy in favor of a few against the need of the many.

In an ideal society war would be recognized as necessary in only one instance: when the defeat by the opposition would result in slavery. Otherwise, all efforts must be expended to view problems disturbing harmony fairly and to evaluate origins and methods in order that men may work to achieve the balanced outlook necessary in peaceful living. For a standard of judgment and for inspiration mankind must look to Christianity as its hope. The ideal social order, imbued with the virtue of Humility, would enable men and nations to see one another as equals and as brothers in life. There would be no chance for a heresy of racial superiority to attempt to enslave mankind because of a living concept of brotherhood. Chesterton believed that man would then be

given the opportunity to correct the abuses in society, and Christendom could accomplish what it was very near to achieving in the Middle Ages, until a reversal was occasioned by the disruption of its progress by protestations on the part of those who were impatient.....the reality of the true Christian state within a Christianized world.

The foregoing statements provide an indication, in brief, of the essence of Chesterton's views on an ideal society. It is a social philosophy worthwhile and objectively fair, and one which could be studied advantageously by all who are deeply and sincerely concerned with making our world a better and wiser world than they found it--a concern to which Chesterton unselfishly devoted the major part of his life.

XIII

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to present an indication of the social views of Gilbert Keith Chesterton. It is also intended as an aid in familiarizing the average citizen with the really substantial contribution of Chesterton who is, regrettably, known to the general public chiefly for his hobby--detective fiction. It is an attempt to present his analysis of social and economic evils and to indicate his methods of correction.

Chesterton believed in the Creation of man and his endowment with special qualities that made him superior to his environment and any other living organism within or without that environment. For this reason man, the possessor of the faculty of free will is independent of any instinctive compulsion which confines the animal world to set patterns of behavior. Chesterton viewed man as Christian man in his position of dignity as inheritor of the earth and the bounty thereon. Because of this concept he denounced the twin evils of capitalism and communism as subversive forces which were jeopardizing the dignity of man by accepting him on the same basis as the machine. To a failure to respect the importance of all men, even to the least and poorest among them, Chesterton attributed the exploitation of labor for the aggrandizement of fortunes. He championed

the right of labor to share equally in the profits of commercial and industrial activity. He challenged the right of any man, however brilliant or superior, to accumulate wealth at the expense of his fellow man. For every new fortune there was, he claimed, a new poverty. His solution of the "haves" and "have-nots" problem is found in his program of Distributism which is chiefly a means to restore liberty to the common man through the redistribution of property.

Chesterton called for sanity in the social order, by which he meant the balanced view of man in relation to any of the many activities which are involved in modern life. His challenge to the modern world to return to the ideals of medieval Christian society is not without serious forethought; for he saw in modern life a corruption stemming from the infusion of false philosophies which presented a warped concept of man in relation to the universe.

There is an indication of Chesterton's evaluation of the family and its importance in the social structure. In the family is enshrined the basic rights from which the rights of nations grow. Unless the family is fostered there will be no social order, for the family is its beginning, a society in miniature. Chesterton contested the right of the state to infringe on the independence of the family by programs of eugenics and birth control. He

decried the reluctance of the state to regulate malicious industrial practices which inhibited, by low wages, the ability of the average man to establish and maintain a family in decent living conditions.

He held strong ideas on education and the place of women which differed greatly from those of the average modern. He would revise the progressive educationalist theory of education as a process of evolution and would stamp it with the truly progressive definition of education as a transmission of culture. For him there must be no coddling; but there must be teaching. The most important part of this teaching would not take place in the school but in the home, the most influential agency in the life of the child. For the successful educative function of the home there must be a mother, and Chesterton would not have her gate-crashing the man's world of commerce, but he would have her in the highest attainable position for women: the despotic manager of the home. There she could really accomplish the most challenging of all tasks, the fostering of the early life of future members of society. Chesterton considered this work more interesting and more indicative of true reward than any other occupation in the world.

Within the pages of this thesis there is an attempt to present Chesterton's views on the problems of war and

peace. There is an inclusion of his opinions on the menace of Hitlerism, which he labelled as undeclared Prussianism and traced to the source of Pride. Until humanity rids itself of this vice there will be a constant threat by one nation to assert its authority over another by enslavement, he said. Slavery he considered the one valid objective against which all men must war in order to preserve the God-given rights to liberty, equality and brotherhood.

An endeavor to present Chesterton's views on the theory of racial superiority has led to an inclusion of his opinions on a number of related problems, among them the Jewish problem and the Polish question. He groups pacifists, cynics and sceptics among the greatest enemies of a country. His analysis of the Versailles map-makers is unique, and his recognition of the role of Austria in maintaining European order are provocative of comparison with commonly held opinions on these matters.

In the last chapters of this thesis there is an explanation of what Chesterton held to be absolutely necessary to the attainment of the ideal social order in which he places the hope of a miserable and afflicted world--the recognition by all men of their true brotherhood in Christ through the acceptance and practice of traditional Christianity.

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XIV

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